Counter Memories: Seeing Empire Through the National Trust, c. 1895 – c. 2020



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Abstract

The National Trust owns hundreds of historic buildings, many of which are country houses, across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Over the past twenty years, the Trust has engaged with the colonial histories of its properties and collections through exhibitions and research collaborations, but this has often been met with controversy. Criticisms range from surprise at these historic connections, to the suggestion that the Trust is acting out of political correctness and that its houses are not appropriate spaces for discussing colonialism. Yet from its founding, the National Trust has been engaged in telling the history of the British Empire.

This thesis proposes that the disconnect between the colonial history of the country house and its role today can be better accounted for through a greater understanding of the history of the National Trust itself. Beginning with the founding of the National Trust in 1895, this thesis considers how the Trust understood its role in promoting a patriotic history across the British Empire. The thesis considers several key moments in the National Trust's history. This includes the creation of the Country Houses Scheme in 1936, which enabled the Trust to acquire country houses systematically, and its repeated collaborations with preservationists in the US and organisations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington and Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia. It also explores historic preservation in the wider context of twentieth-century British colonialism by using Lord Curzon (1859-1925), Viceroy of India 1899-1905, as a case study. Through the examples of the Trust's Transatlantic relationships and Curzon, a pattern emerges whereby influential men are uncritically celebrated and memorialised through their former homes. The continued effects of these moments are seen in the presentation of the houses today.

This thesis is an important contribution to the growing body of research on the widespread connections between British country houses and colonialism. It ultimately contends that the Trust must comprehend and consider its own institutional history to truly address its colonial histories and make informed choices about what it continues to preserve and how.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In this introductory chapter, I provide a background history of the National Trust as some context for the reader before a literature review which covers key developments in the study of country houses and the Trust in relation to colonialism. Following this, I outline how I came to focus on this topic; my theoretical approach to the subject matter and the primary sources I've drawn on; the scope of the thesis; and the structure of the chapters which follow.

What is the National Trust?

The idea for the National Trust formed as a product of the movements to protect public access to open spaces and to preserve historically significant buildings in the second half of the nineteenth century. Octavia Hill, Robert Hunter, and Hardwicke Rawnsley founded the National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty in 1895 under the Joint Stock Companies Act. Hill and Hunter were founding members of the Commons Preservation Society (CPS), which campaigned to protect common land from enclosure and development, and the Trust was founded specifically to be able to purchase land and buildings to be preserved and made accessible to the public, which was something the CPS could not do as it was not a company. Shortly after it formed, the Trust was given its first property, five acres of clifftop at Dinas Oleu in Wales. Its first building came a year later when it purchased Alfriston Clergy House, a medieval building in Sussex. Often, the Trust's early years are defined by its preservation of outdoor spaces, but buildings were always a core part of its work. The Trust was strongly influenced by John Ruskin, the prominent philosopher and art critic who mentored Hill, and William Morris' Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings. The latter advocated for "anti-scrape" methods of preservation, which saw buildings preserved without altering their structures rather than attempting to restore them retrospectively as had been popular throughout the nineteenth century.

Though the National Trust aims to represent the interests of the nation, it is not a national body in the sense that it is independent of the government. It is a private charity but became a statutory body after the 1907 National Trust Act was passed, giving it the right to hold land inalienably, and making it a requirement to gain permission from Parliament to purchase its property. Any interpretation of what the Trust is and who it is for raises questions about how it relates to the nation(s) it serves. The National Trust's founders were concerned with national identity and ideas of citizenship even though they were independent of government. Hill saw her charitable work in terms of creating better citizens. The Trust works across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland and before its independence, Ireland was also included in its work. Scotland set up its own National Trust for Scotland in 1931, and as a result the National Trust represents only part of Britain's heritage. Being based in London and mostly owning property in the south of England also contributes to the Trust's somewhat Anglocentric vision of the British past. However, throughout its history the Trust has embraced different visions of national history as the focus of its preservation efforts have changed according to changing values and needs.

Writing in 1995, the historian David Cannadine described four overlapping phases in the Trust's history: preserving open spaces (1895-1920); proclaiming "spiritual values" (1914-1948); rescuing country houses (1935-1970); and safeguarding the environment, (1965-present).[1] The first few decades of the Trust's existence largely focused on vernacular buildings and open spaces, continuing in the same vein its founders had set out to. During Cannadine's second phase, the Trust is characterised as a more conservative body. Throughout the First World War the Trust was essentially inactive, but during the interwar period became an important tool, alongside the BBC, of Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government's politics focused on consensus and promoting a vision of the English countryside as the home of the national character.[2] In the 1930s, the Trust turned its attention to country houses, which were increasingly being abandoned or

[1] David Cannadine, 'The First Hundred Years,' in Howard Newby (ed.), *The National Trust: The Next Hundred Years*, (London: The National Trust, 1995).
[2] Cannadine, 'The First Hundred Years,' 15-6.

sold off by their owners. While the National Trust acquired its first country house, Barrington Court, Somerset, in 1907, it did not set out to acquire them systematically until 1936 when its Country Houses Scheme began. The 1937 and 1939 National Trust Acts allowed country house owners to transfer their properties to the Trust in lieu of tax and, though it was initially slow to acquire properties, it gained traction after the Second World War.

By the mid-1960s, the Trust was seen to represent aristocratic interests over those of the public, and critics suggested it was neglecting its original commitment to improving working people's lives through access to beautiful, historic spaces as a result. This was in part because, although the Trust had gained huge amounts of property through its country houses scheme, the extent of public opening was limited in this era, following the wishes of former owners, who often still lived on site. In 1968, the Trust commissioned Henry Benson to chair a committee to conduct a review of its governance, which led to a series of reforms, including the delegation of more power to the Trust's regional committees. In this period, the Trust also began taking on new forms of built heritage, often industrial, as well as extensive areas of coastline, and fewer country houses. By the 1980s, the Trust was becoming increasingly professionalised and gaining a more commercial image as it grew into a large, widely known institution with a membership that continued to grow. Since the millennium, the Trust has cemented its role as a large and influential conservation organisation, with climate change being one of its core concerns, and it has continued to acquire historic properties connected to a widening range of histories. Today, the National Trust is the largest conservation charity in Europe. It owns and looks after over 780 miles of coastline; 250,000 hectares of land; 500 historic houses, castles, parks, and gardens; and nearly 1 million artworks.[3] As of 2022, the National Trust has 44,000 volunteers and 6,651 employees.[4]

[3] 'About the National Trust Today,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/about-the-national-trust-today, accessed 20 October 2023.
[4] 'The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty,' Charity Commission Register of Charities, https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/sector-data/top-10-charities/-/charity-details/205846/charity-overview, accessed 1 October 2023.

The National Trust, Country Houses, and Empire: The Story So Far

Colonialism and the Country House

In 2005, James Walvin posed the question: *what happened to the money made from slavery when it returned to Britain?*[5] Walvin was leading a research team at the University of York investigating the origins of the Harewood family's wealth through the archives held at Harewood House in Leeds. Harewood House was completed in 1771 for Edwin Lascelles, 1st Baron Harewood, using money from the family's plantations in Barbados. Connections between individual country houses and the British Empire have always been known, usually seen in wealth created from the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the East India Company. Raymond Williams' (1973) *The Country and the City* asserted that the country house system was built from the sixteenth century on the profits of colonialism.[6] However, concerted academic research into the specifics of these histories emerged in the 1990s and 2000s. Edward Said's influential 1993 essay 'Jane Austen and Empire' argued that in her novel *Mansfield Park* (1814) Austen presented the country house and domestic imperial culture in Britain with an ambivalence about the wealth underpinning them being produced through slave labour.[7] Madge Dresser suggests that James Walvin and Simon Smith's research on Harewood[8], along with Alistair Hennessey's on Penrhyn Castle[9], in Bangor, were the first to explicitly address 'the question of slavery wealth' in Britain, alongside local grassroots studies made possible by the creation of the Heritage Lottery Fund in 1994.[10] Dresser's own 2001

[5] James Walvin, 'The Colonial Origins of English Wealth: The Harewoods of Yorkshire,' *The Journal of Caribbean History*, 39:1 (2005), 38-53, 38.
[6] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).
[7] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Vintage, 1993).
[8] Simon Smith, *Slavery, Family, and Gentry Capitalism in the British Atlantic: The World of the Lascelles, 1648-1834,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[9] Alistair Hennessy, 'Penrhyn Castle,' *History Today*, 45, 1 January 1995, https://www.historytoday.com/archive/penrhyn-castle, accessed 1 September 2023.
[10] Madge Dresser, 'Legacies of British Slave Ownership: Facing a Difficult Past,' in David Cannadine and Jeremy Musson (Eds.) *The Country House: Past, Present, Future,* (New York: Rizzoli, 2018), 344.

book shared new findings about slavery links at Dyrham Park, Doddington Hall, and Kings Weston House as part of a wider survey of Bristol's links to the Slave Trade.[11]

Research into Transatlantic slavery's impact on Britain broadened in 2007 with the commemorations held to mark the Bicentenary of the 1807 Abolition of the Slave Trade Act. The activities organised nationwide to commemorate Abolition have been critiqued for their overwhelmingly patriotic narrative of British benevolence, with a focus on how different communities and figures such as William Wilberforce in Britain took part in campaigns to abolish the Trade, with little reflection on Britain's prior role in it since the sixteenth century, or its legacies and ramifications in Britain and its former colonies.[12] The activities organised for the Bicentenary sparked a wave of research into the history of slavery in Britain. English Heritage, a government body which became a charity in 2015, commissioned research into links between its properties and slavery, with an initial study of 33 properties built or occupied between c. 1640-1807 finding that 26 of them had connections to slavery.[13] Four more detailed reports were published in 2010 by English Heritage, looking at slavery connections to Brodsworth Hall, Bolsover Castle, Northington Grange, and Marble Hill House respectively, conducted and written by Susanne Seymour, Sheryllnne Haggerty, and Laurence Brown.[14] In 2009, English Heritage and the National Trust held a joint conference which led to the publication of *Slavery and the British Country House* in 2013, edited by Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann. *Slavery and the British Country House* had four key themes or areas of focus. These centred on how wealth derived from

[11] Madge Dresser, *Slavery Obscured: The Social History of the Slave Trade in an English Provincial Port c. 1698-c.1833*, (Continuum Books: London, 2001).
[12] See John Beech, 'A Step Forwards or a Step Sideways?: Some Personal Reflections of How the Presentation of Slavery Has (Or Hasn't) Changed in the Last Few Years,' *Institute of Historical Research*, https://archives.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/exhibitions/museums/step.html; Geoffrey Cubitt, 'Bringing It Home: Making Local Meaning in 2007 Bicentenary Exhibitions,' Slavery and Abolition, 30:2 (2009); Sasha L. Johnston, 'The Idea(L) of White British Benevolence: "Breaking the Chains" and the 2007 Bicentennial of Abolition,' *Philament*, 15 (2009).
[13] Miranda Kaufmann, 'English Heritage Properties 1600-1830 and Slavery Connections: A Report Undertaken to Mark the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the British Atlantic Slave Trade,' English Heritage, 2007, accessible from: https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/research/slavery/.
[14] 'Slavery Connections to English Heritage Sites,' English Heritage website, https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/research/slavery/, accessed 1 October 2023.

the trade in enslaved Africans affected the creation, maintenance, and renovation of British stately homes; how merchants and the landed elite used notions of gentility, sensibility, and cultural refinement to distance themselves from their own involvement in the Atlantic Slave Trade; how the aesthetics employed in the décor of country houses directly referenced slavery; and the legacy of slavery in country houses today, particularly concerning how these histories might be represented in the future.[15]

From this point, research into country houses with links to slavery, and with colonialism's broader history, has continued to grow. A big influence on research in this area was UCL's Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery, which ran the *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership* project from 2009 to 2012 and a second project, *Structure and Significance of British Caribbean Slave-Ownership 1763-1833*, from 2013 to 2015. *Legacies of British Slave Ownership* was led by Catherine Hall and led to the creation of a public, online database which has transformed research in this area.[16] The initial findings of this body of research were published in *Legacies of Slave-Ownership* in 2014, which contributed to our growing understanding of the extent to which slavery shaped the British economy.[17] Building on Eric Williams' *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944), Nicholas Draper's contribution to *Legacies of Slave Ownership* and his 2010 book, *The Price of Emancipation*, have further demonstrated the extent of British wealth derived from slavery.[18] This has recently been expanded on further by Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson's study of the Slave Trade's impact on British industrialisation.[19] Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley, and Jessica Moody's edited volume, *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery,* provides regional studies of slave

[15] Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann, 'Introduction,' in Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann (eds.), *Slavery and the British Country House,* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2013), 14.
[16] The Legacies of British Slavery Database is accessible from: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/, accessed 12 September 2023.
[17] Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Katie Donington, and Rachel Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[18] Nicholas Draper, *The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[19] Maxine Berg and Pat Hudson, *Slavery, Capitalism and the Industrial Revolution,* (John Wiley & Sons, 2023).

ownership, as well as further reflections on the remembrance of slavery in Britain.[20] Through a greater understanding of the extent to which slavery shaped the British economy, and particularly with the ability to follow the money through the Legacies of British Slave Ownership database, it has become easier to identify country estates with such connections.

In 2014, Stephanie Barczewski published *Country Houses and the British Empire, 1700-1930*, which demonstrates the financial and cultural influence of colonialism on hundreds of country houses in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland and provided initial estimates of the numbers of houses with colonial links.[21] Continuing to broaden the focus from Transatlantic slavery to wider colonial links, the *East India Company at Home, 1757-1857* (2011-2014), was a project that focused on connections between British country houses and the East India Company led by Margot Finn and Kate Smith. This project began at the University of Warwick and continued at UCL, using a series of houses, families, and objects as case studies through which to explore East India Company connections to country houses in Scotland, England, and Wales.[22] Key examples from the project were also published in *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857* in 2018.[23] Nuala Zahedieh suggests that a significant proportion of individuals who made their fortunes through the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries used that money to acquire country houses, with colonial merchants who had the means to demonstrating 'an almost universal desire to immobilise a large part of their wealth in an inalienable landed estate'.[24] Katie Donington's *The Bonds of Family* (2019) studies one family, the

[20] Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley, Jessica Moody (eds.), *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a "National Sin",* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).
[21] Stephanie Barczewski, *Country Houses and the British Empire, 1700-1930*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).
[22] 'About East India Company at Home,' East India Company at Home Blog, UCL website, https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/eicah/about/, accessed 12 September 2023.
[23] Margot Finn and Kate Smith (eds.), *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857,* (London: UCL Press, 2018).
[24] Nuala Zahedieh, 'An Open Elite? Colonial Commerce, the Country House and the Case of Sir Gilbert Heathcote and Normanton Hall,' in Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann (eds.), *Slavery and the British Country House*, (Swindon: English Heritage, 2013), 73.

Hibberts, to tell an inter-generational history of involvement with slavery economically, politically, and socially.[25]

This growing body of research is demonstrating that colonialism shaped British country houses to a much greater extent than was previously understood. Corinne Fowler has used new data to reevaluate Said's Jane Austen essay, arguing that he actually underestimated the extent to which slavery would have been visible to Austen living in Georgian Britain.[26] Fowler's books *Green Unpleasant Land* (2020) and *Our Island Stories* (2024) pushes beyond the country house to recognise the place of colonial history in the British countryside more widely.[27] Fowler also emphasises the interconnected histories of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the East India Company, as has Chris Jeppesen in his contribution to *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery*.[28] Establishing financial connections has been a core part of this body of research, and this has been tied to an interest in how that money was spent on the houses and their interiors, meaning country house collections are also going through a period of reinterpretation with renewed interest in objects being imported to the British countryside from around the world. Within a broader turn towards material culture studies among historians which draws on the traditions of art history, archaeology and anthropology[29], the country house has

[25] Katie Donington, *The Bonds of Family: Slavery, Commerce and Culture in the British Atlantic World,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).
[26] Corinne Fowler, 'Revisiting Mansfield Park: The Critical and Literacy Legacies of Edward W. Said's Essay "Jane Austen and Empire" in Culture and Imperialism (1993),' *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, 4:3 (2017), 362-381.
[27] Corinne Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land: Creative Responses to Rural England's Colonial Connections,* (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2020); Corinne Fowler, *Our Island Stories: Country Walks Through Colonial Britain*, (London: Penguin Random House, 2024).
[28] Chris Jeppesen, 'East Meets West: Exploring the Connections between Britain, the Caribbean and the East India Company, c. 1757-1857', in Katie Donington, Ryan Hanley, Jessica Moody (eds.), *Britain's History and Memory of Transatlantic Slavery: Local Nuances of a "National Sin",* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).
[29] See Anne Gerritsen and Gorgio Riello (eds.), *Writing Material Culture History*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Ivan Gaskell and Sarah Anne Carter (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of History and Material Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Giorgio Riello, 'The "Material Turn in World and Global History,' *Journal of World History*, 33:2 (2022), 193-232.

been located as a key site to study consumption patterns among Britain's elites, as seen in *Travel and the British Country House* (2017), edited by Jon Stobart.[30]

The National Trust has only recently made steps towards developing a more comprehensive understanding of the varied relationships between its own properties and colonial history since it began to in 2007. Colonial Countryside was a collaborative project between the University of Leicester and the National Trust which ran between 2018 and 2022.[31] Led by Corinne Fowler, Colonial Countryside involved visits to country houses, research, workshops, training, and the creation of new interpretation panels and labels for participating National Trust properties. This project was child-led and saw 100 children from participating primary schools create written responses to the histories of country houses and collections which were featured in new exhibition materials used by the Trust, and in the book *Colonial Countryside* (to be published in 2024).[32] One of the other key ways colonial connections to National Trust properties are being researched is through collaborative PhDs like my own; I am part of a cohort of PhD students conducting wide-ranging research into colonial histories in partnership with the National Trust.[33]

In 2020, the National Trust published its *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery*. The Interim Report details connections between 93 National Trust properties, British colonialism, and

[30] Jon Stobart (Ed.), *Travel and the British Country House: Cultures, Critiques and Consumption in the Long Eighteenth Century*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).
[31] 'Colonial Countryside,' University of Leicester website, https://le.ac.uk/colonial-countryside, accessed 10 August 2023.
[32] Corinne Fowler (ed.), *Colonial Countryside: An Anthology of Creative and Historical Responses*, (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2024).
[33] Some examples of forthcoming PhD theses in this area include: Annabelle Gilmore, 'Slavery and Empire on Display at Charlecote Park,' (University of Birmingham); Charlotte Johnson, 'Imperial Connections: Re-examining Kedleston Hall,' (University of Birmingham); Arisa Loomba, '"The Book of the Overseas Club": Reading Spaces of Mobility in the late British Empire through Rudyard Kipling's English Home,' (University of Oxford); Rhea Tuli Partridge, 'The "Complications" of the Clive Collection: "Conflict", Culture Wars and *Lut*,' (University of Cambridge); Alice Whitehead, 'Shugborough Hall, the Ansons and the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic Economy,' (University of Cambridge).

Transatlantic slavery.[34] The Trust framed its criteria for the links to be included as properties with a historical narrative relating to:

- Wealth connected to the proceeds of slavery or the slavery compensation scheme
- Ownership of a company or business connected to the enslavement of people or with significant interests in overseas colonies
- Support for or opposition to the abolition of slavery
- The expansion and settlement into countries resulting in displacement, injury, or unequal economic benefits (e.g. involvement in merchant companies such as the East India Company)
- Involvement in senior colonial administration
- Culturally significant involvement in the literature and/or promotion of colonialism or slavery
- The African, Asian, and Chinese 'presence' in the properties, through artistic representations or through records of individuals living in or visiting them
- Collection items known to have been taken by illicit means in colonial territories

The Interim Report was part of a wider process of research into colonial history at the National Trust, amongst a wider push to diversify the histories it tells through its properties.[35] The Trust's Colonial Countryside project and the 2020 Interim Report sit within a wider shift in the charity's historical focus, which has seen it begin to explore other marginalised histories within its collections, namely the histories of working-class communities, women, LGBT+ communities, and most recently disability. This comes as historic houses are changing internationally; in 2015, Lisa Junkin Lopez suggested that professionals are reimagining the historic house, 'often petrified and

[34] Sally-Anne Huxtable, Corinne Fowler, Christo Kefalas, and Emma Slocombe (eds.), *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery*, National Trust, (2020), Accessible from: https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/research/addressing-our-histories-of-colonialism-and-historic-slavery.

[35] See, for example, the National Trust's 'Challenging Histories' programming. 'Challenging Histories,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/our-cause/history-heritage/challenging-histories-public-programme-2017-19, accessed 20 October 2023.

lifeless in their presentation', to become active spaces in which both the past and the present can be engaged.[36]

Writing in 2018, Madge Dresser commented that while the list of British stately homes linked to wealth derived from slavery keeps growing, 'the willingness to incorporate such evidence into the ways these houses are publicly presented is arguably less in evidence now than it was in 2007', noting that cohesive plans to address these histories had not yet been created or implemented by the National Trust or other bodies involved in country house preservation.[37] While in the introduction to the Trust's Interim Report the authors acknowledged that these histories have been 'forgotten, obscured, overlooked or insufficiently explored at many of our places', no explanation as to why this was the case was given.[38] There is also no indication of the Trust's own institutional links to Empire in the document. Although the publication of the Interim Report in 2020 was not the first time the Trust had linked its properties to the history of British colonialism, trying to trace the ways that the National Trust has engaged with and presented the histories of the British Empire is difficult as institutional memory can often be short and records of temporary exhibitions and short-term projects are often lacking, particularly through the Trust's website, which primarily provides information about how to access its properties. Some examples of older exhibitions and projects linked to colonial history are noted throughout this thesis and reflect that this history is something that has been acknowledged at various points by the Trust and repeatedly forgotten or sidelined. In the National Trust's 1980 guide to Clevedon Court, for example, the family's slavery connections are mentioned in passing but go unmentioned in a guide

[36] Lisa Junkin Lopez, 'Introduction, "Open House: Reimagining the Historic House Museum",' *The Public Historian,* 37:2 (2015), 10-13.
[37] Madge Dresser, 'Legacies of British Slave Ownership: Facing a Difficult Past,' in David Cannadine and Jeremy Musson (Eds.) *The Country House: Past, Present, Future,* (New York: Rizzoli, 2018), 347.
[38] Sally-Anne Huxtable, Tarnya Cooper, and John Orna-Ornstein, 'Introduction,' in Sally-Anne Huxtable, Corinne Fowler, Christo Kefalas, and Emma Slocombe (eds.), *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery*, National Trust, (2020), Accessible from: https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/research/addressing-our-histories-of-colonialism-and-historic-slavery, 5.

published in 2003.[39] This is just one example that demonstrates this is not a linear history. The 2020 Interim Report is informative but lacks institutional reflection about why these histories have not been a part of the Trust's core historic narratives to date.

Telling the Trust's History

The history of the National Trust has largely been told by itself. Accounts of its institutional history have traditionally been written by individuals who have worked for the Trust and have typically been published to commemorate anniversaries and other achievements. They typically follow a similar narrative, updated each time with new developments. For the Trust's fiftieth anniversary, a volume edited by James Lees-Milne, the first Secretary of the Trust's Country Houses Committee, was published in 1945 in memory of the Trust's founders. The chapters were written by various members of the Trust's staff and are organised around the different types of property the Trust owned: national parks, countryside and coastline, ancient sites, medieval buildings, manor houses, country houses, country buildings, town buildings, historic shrines – referring to properties linked to famous historical figures - and nature reserves.[40] The chapters focus on the nature of the different types of property and the Trust's interest in and methods of preserving them. Lees-Milne's published diaries and later books, such as *People and Places*, offer a record of the Trust's Country Houses Scheme, particularly his role in visiting houses to negotiate with owners who might wish to transfer their property to the Trust.[41] Robin Fedden, who succeeded Lees-Milne as the Trust's historic buildings secretary in 1951, wrote a history of the National Trust published in 1968, which provides an overview of the National Trust's history so far as well as its administrative practices at the time of writing.[42] Multiple institutional histories have been

[39] Madge Dresser, 'Slavery and West Country Houses,' in Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann (eds.), *Slavery and the British Country House*, (Swindon: English Heritage, 2013), 33.
[40] James Lees-Milne (ed.), *The National Trust: A Record of Fifty Years' Achievement*, (Norwich: Jarrold and Sons Limited, 1945).
[41] See James Lees-Milne, *Ancestral Voices, 1942-3* (1975), *Prophesising Peace, 1944-5* (1977), *Caves of Ice, 1946-7* (1983), and *Midway on the Waves, 1948-9* (1985); James Lees-Milne, *People and Places: Country House Donors and the National Trust*, (1992).
[42] Robin Fedden, *The Continuing Purpose: A History of the National Trust, Its Aims and Work,* (London: Longmans, 1968).

published by or in association with the National Trust, including Graham Murphy's 1987 history of the Trust's founders; *Figures in a Landscape* by John Gaze, published posthumously in 1988; and *From Acorn to Oak Tree* (1994), co-authored by Jennifer Jenkins and Patrick James.[43] Merlin Waterson, who worked for the Trust from 1970 and became its Regional Director in East Anglia in 1981, has also authored two histories of the National Trust, *The First Hundred Years* (1995) and *A Noble Thing: The National Trust and Its Benefactors* (2011).[44] The former was also accompanied by a BBC television series.

Graham Murphy's account details the Open Spaces Movement and dedicates a chapter each to Hill, Rawnsley, and Hunter, giving them equal weight and suggesting in his conclusion that Octavia Hill's dominance in people's remembrance of the founders is 'distorted'.[45] By the 1960s, the Trust had become associated with country houses, and as it grew and solidified a large-scale membership over the following decades, it was often accused by critics of elitism and privileging the conservation of the country house over open spaces. Murphy hints that the 'campaigning spirit' of the founders had 'lost some of its momentum' in recent years.[46] He closes his book by pointing to the Trust's changing focus and identity, suggesting that the Trust has remained consistent with its founders' intentions in its policy of acquisition of open spaces. Murphy also notes that the Trust's acquisition of land had slowed since the mid-1960s, becoming more focused on the preservation of its existing properties, while also being associated by the public with elite buildings over vernacular ones since the introduction of the Country Houses Scheme.[47]

In contrast, accounts written by leading figures within the Trust offer more sympathetic accounts of its activities from the 1940s onward. John Gaze was a land agent for 34 years with the Trust, and Chief Agent from 1976 to 1982 and Jennifer Jenkins was Chairman of the National Trust 1986-

[43] Jennifer Jenkins and Patrick James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, (London: Macmillan, 1994).
[44] Merlin Waterson, *The National Trust: The First Hundred Years,* (1995); Merlin Waterson, *The National Trust Handbook*, (National Trust, 1998); Merlin Waterson, *A Noble Thing: The National Trust and its Benefactors,* (Scala Publishers Ltd. in association with the National Trust, 2011).
[45] Graham Murphy, *Founders of the National Trust,* (National Trust Enterprises Ltd., 1987), 125.
[46] Murphy, *Founders of the National Trust,* 122.
[47] Murphy, *Founders of the National Trust,* 123-4.

1990. Gaze writes that criticism of the Trust was misplaced, suggesting that costly conservation works on country houses draw more attention than nature conservation and that the Trust has always been equally committed to both, although he concedes that the public perception that this is not the case is itself an important issue.[48] Moreover, Gaze notes that while the Trust had traditionally taken a more diplomatic 'behind-the-scenes' approach when it came to debate about environmental protection, this was in the process of changing and that the Trust was increasingly recognising a need to take a position publicly on this issue, as it did regarding a 1987 government paper regarding agricultural land.[49]

Academic accounts of the Trust's history have typically focused on a specific period or aspect of the Trust's work, rather than trying to offer any comprehensive study of its history. Jeremy Ashbee has written about the Trust's relationship with the Ministry of Works in relation to the preservation of Hailes Abbey, and Sean Nixon's analysis of the Trust in the post-War period focuses on the Benson Report of 1968 and the reforms which the Trust implemented following its publication.[50] *The National Trust: The Next Hundred Years,* edited by Howard Newby, a Professor of Sociology and Vice Chancellor of the University of Southampton (1994-2001), is a volume of more academic essays focused on what the Trust might focus on in the future, published in 1994 for its centenary.[51] Each essay focuses on a different aspect of the Trust's work across historic buildings and nature conservation. Astrid Swenson and Melanie Hall have written about the Trust's founding and its early years, making important contributions to our understanding of the Trust as a body influenced by the wider, international development of historic preservation, rather than studying it in isolation. Crucially, Hall has demonstrated a clear theme in the Trust's

[48] John Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape*, (London: Barrie & Jenkins in association with the National Trust, 1988), 316.
[49] Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape*, 316.
[50] Jeremy Ashbee, 'Conservation and Presentation at Hailes Abbey: Debates Between the National Trust and the Ministry of Works' *English Heritage Historical Review*, 7:1 (2012), 94-109; Sean Nixon, 'Trouble at the National Trust: Post-war Recreation, the Benson Report and the Rebuilding of a Conservation Organization in the 1960s,' *Twentieth Century British History*, 26:4 (2015), 529–550.
[51] Howard Newby (ed.), *The National Trust: The Next Hundred Years*, (London: National Trust Enterprises Ltd, 1995).

work being its interest in US preservation, which influenced the Trust from its founding, and its collaborations across the Atlantic to preserve what it saw as a shared, Transatlantic history.[52] Similarly, Swenson has situated the National Trust within a wider history of transnational heritage across Europe and North America.[53] Octavia Hill's international influence has also been documented[54], but otherwise most histories have focused on the national context in which the Trust developed. The volume of essays edited by Elizabeth Baigent and Ben Cowell about Octavia Hill's wider career has also provided a nuanced account of her legacy, including a chapter by Cowell focused on the National Trust specifically, which surveys the political links of the Trust in its first few decades.[55] Others who have written about the history of the Trust from more critical perspectives have typically focused on its modern role as a large heritage organisation, discussed further below in relation to the wider heritage debates of the 1980s.

[52] See Melanie Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting: The Early Aspirations of the National Trust, 1883-1913,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6:1 (2003), 345-357; Melanie Hall, 'Plunder or Preservation? Contesting the Anglo-American Heritage in the Later Nineteenth Century,' in Peter Mandler and Astrid Swenson (eds.), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire c. 1800-1940*, (Proceedings of the British Academy, 2013); Melanie Hall (ed.), *Towards World Heritage: International Origins of the Preservation Movement, 1870-1930,* (London: Routledge, 2016); Melanie Hall, 'Octavia Hill and the National Trust,' in Elizabeth Baignet and Ben Cowell (eds.), *"Nobler Imaginings and Mightier Struggles": Octavia Hill and the Remaking of British Society,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[53] Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage: Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler (eds.), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire c. 1800-1940*, (Proceedings of the British Academy, 2013); Astrid Swenson, '"To Every Landless Man, Woman and Child in England": Octavia Hill and the Preservation Movement,' in Elizabeth Baigent and Ben Cowell (eds.), *"Nobler Imaginings and Mightier Struggles" Octavia Hill, Social Activism and the Remaking of British Society,* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2016).

[54] See John F. Sutherland, 'The Origins of Philadelphia's Octavia Hill Association: Social Reform in the "Contented City,' *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography,* 99:1 (1975), 20-44; Jennifer Robinson, 'Octavia Hill Women Housing Managers in South Africa: Femininity and Urban Government,' *Journal of Historical Geography,* 24:4 (1998), 459-481; Daphne Spain, 'Octavia Hill's Philosophy of Housing Reform: From British Roots to American Soil,' *Journal of Planning History*, 5:2 (2006), 106-125; Astrid Swenson, '"To Every Landless Man, Woman and Child in England": Octavia Hill and the Preservation Movement,' in Elizabeth Baigent and Ben Cowell (eds.), *"Nobler Imaginings and Mightier Struggles" Octavia Hill, Social Activism and the Remaking of British Society,* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2016).

[55] Ben Cowell, 'For the Benefit of the Nation: Politics and the Early National Trust,' in Elizabeth Baigent and Ben Cowell (eds.), *"Nobler Imaginings and Mightier Struggles" Octavia Hill, Social Activism and the Remaking of British Society,* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2016).

Country Houses

The recent interest in colonial histories of country houses is changing how they are understood. While this area of study shifts our attention from the city to the country in understanding how imperialism shaped Britain, it also challenges understandings of the country house as something disconnected from wider society. As this section discusses, most writing about the histories of country houses has been written with an architectural focus, or with an interest in the landed families' and their servants' lifestyles. These have often been told by people who have been involved in campaigns for country house preservation or tax exemptions, or have been country house owners themselves. This has meant that most studies of country houses have been sympathetic, often with a motivation to present them in a way that will convince other people of their importance and public benefit. In the context of the National Trust, it is the result of the charity's motivations to justify the preservation of the country house and to promote an image of it which is in keeping with the "nice day out" it offers visitors. Key people who called for the protection of the country house in the 1930s and 1940s were often owners themselves, or in their social circles, as were many individuals involved with the National Trust from the 1930s to the 1960s. The development of country house studies was happening at the same time that the country house was being reimagined as a key aspect of national heritage.

Evelyn Waugh's 1945 novel *Brideshead Revisited*, famous for its romanticisation of country house life, was written at a time when the country house seemed most likely to cease to exist. Waugh later wrote in the preface to the 1960 edition that when he wrote *Brideshead* it was impossible to foresee 'the present cult of the English country house', and that he had 'piled it on', perceiving the position of country houses as being 'doomed to decay and spoliation' as monasteries had been during the Dissolution in the sixteenth century, many of which had ironically been recreated as country houses themselves.[56] Waugh had written *Brideshead* from his own house, Piers Court,

[56] Evelyn Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder,* (London: Penguin Books, 2020).

where he lived between 1937 and 1956, and which is still privately owned today.[57] Vita Sackville-West, the writer and garden designer, was a prominent advocate for the preservation of the country house and framed it as a living body, with the family as an inherent part of its true form, writing in 1941 that it was 'not only *in* the country, but part of it, a natural growth'.[58] Sackville-West grew up at Knole, in Kent, now one of the National Trust's flagship country houses, and bought Sissinghurst Castle, which had previously been in her family's ownership (also in Kent), with her husband Harold Nicolson in the 1930s. Sackville-West was involved with the National Trust, helping to negotiate the transfer of Knole from her uncle to the Trust in the 1940s and becoming a member of its council, along with Harold, who became vice-chairman of the Executive Council.[59] The idea that Sackville-West helped popularise, that a country house needed the family to remain in it to maintain its authenticity, was one which the Trust helped popularise in the early years of its Country Houses Scheme.

From the 1930s, *Country Life* magazine had also been promoting the country house as a core part of the nation's history, worthy of protection from its decline. Government assistance came through the Trust's Country Houses Scheme, as private owners were given the option to transfer their houses to the Trust in lieu of tax. Fresh appeals from private country house owners for tax relief came in the 1970s, coinciding with a period of reform within the National Trust, which had come to be seen as overly concerned with country houses at the risk of neglecting its original purpose. Private owners began to make the same arguments again which had been made in the 1930s and 1940s. Treasure Houses of England, a consortium of ten privately-owned stately homes, was created in the 1970s and includes Chatsworth, Blenheim Palace, and Harewood House. In 1973 the Historic Houses Association, a self-described cooperative of independent historic houses was

[57] Toby Keel, Evelyn Waugh's Former House, Dubbed "One of the Most Beautiful Houses in Gloucestershire", Sold at Auction,' *Country Life*, 16 December 2022, https://www.countrylife.co.uk/property/one-beautiful-houses-gloucestershire-sale-place-waugh-wrote-brideshead-revisited-177133, accessed 12 September 2023.
[58] Vita Sackville-West, *English Country Houses,* (London: Unicorn, 2014), 8.
[59] 'Vita Sackville-West and Knole,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/knole/vita-sackville-west-and-knole, accessed 12 September 2023.

also established, having formed out of a British Travel Association committee created in 1965.[60] In 1974 the Historic Houses Association collaborated with the National Trust to campaign against the government's proposed wealth tax, and has since continued to lobby for tax exemptions and maintain a cross-party consensus in support of private ownership of historic buildings as an effective avenue for historic preservation.[61] In the same year, the V&A hosted its *Destruction of the Country House* exhibition, described by Roy Strong, Director of the V&A 1974-1987, as an 'exercise in polemic'.[62] The main part of the exhibition was the 'Hall of Destruction' designed by Robin Wade, filled with broken neo-Classical portico columns which had photographs of already-destroyed country houses displayed on them. A recording of John Harris reading out the names of lost country houses also played as visitors walked through, resonating 'with Lists of the Fallen' in war.[63] By the end of the exhibition, 1,600 houses were counted as having been destroyed in the preceding hundred years.[64] SAVE Britain's Heritage, which campaigns to ensure the preservation of historic buildings, was founded the following year in 1975 with a focus on buildings at active risk of demolition.

The architectural historian John Cornforth, whose 1998 book was sponsored by the Historic Houses Association, wrote that individuals writing or talking about country houses from the National Trust, museums, or independently, do not reflect the priorities, responsibilities, or problems of private owners, yet private owners depend on them for the 'continuing cause' of country houses.[65] This framing of the country house as a 'cause' fits within a wider framework, in which much writing about the history of country houses is written in defence of their continued

[60] 'Our Story,' Historic Houses Association website, https://www.historichouses.org/our-story/, accessed 10 September 2023.
[61] Elena Porter, 'Revisiting a Hard-Worn Fight: The History of the HHA,' Historic Houses website, 4 March 2022, https://www.historichouses.org/revisiting-a-hard-won-fight-the-history-of-the-hha/, accessed 1 October 2023.
[62] Roy Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries: 1967-1987,* (London: Phoenix, 1998), 139.
[63] Marcus Binney, *The Destruction of the Country House: 40 Years On*, (London: SAVE Britain's Heritage, 2014), 4.
[64] Marcus Binney, *The Destruction of the Country House: 40 Years On*, (London: SAVE Britain's Heritage, 2014), 4.
[65] John Cornforth, *The Country houses of England 1948-1998,* (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1998), 10-11.

existence. Although Ruth Adams has suggested that Cornforth may have chosen not to be directly involved in the *Destruction* exhibition due to its polemical style, he was otherwise involved in pushing for the country house agenda, including a survey he was commissioned to write for the Historic Houses Association titled 'Country Houses in Britain: Can They Survive?' with funding from owners of historic houses as well as the British Tourist Authority.[66] The wealth tax was dropped and in 1976 the government granted further tax exemptions and subsidies for country house owners and allowed them to vest their assets in charitable trusts free from Capital Transfer Tax.

In the 1980s, the country house went through a period of renewal. Writing in 2005, Giles Worsley, a country house historian, provided a corrective to some of his own earlier writing about the country house in the 1980s and 1990s. Worsley had been writing for *Country Life* in 1985 a time when the future of the country house was assumed to be 'grim', but, similarly to Waugh before him in the 1960s, he looked back in 1994 to realise 'this was not true'.[67] He credits four possible causes for the country house's survival: Thatcherism, asset inflation, 'complicated taxation strategies', and 'attitude'.[68] Worsley's own family seat, Hovingham Hall, North Yorkshire, has been in the family since the sixteenth century. Similarly, Clive Aslet's (2021) *The Story of the Country House* describes the country house revival of the 1980s, during which *Country Life*, which he edited between 1993 and 2006, was full of property pages detailing estates with sporting rights. Old families even reoccupied country houses they had previously let out as institutions, such as Duncombe Park in Yorkshire, which spent sixty years as a school for girls and became Lord and Lady Feversham's family home again.[69] Mark Girouard wrote just three years following the *Destruction of the Country House* exhibition that country houses were not as badly off financially as had often been suggested, yet simultaneously stated that most owners are involved in 'a

[66] Ruth Adams, 'The V&A, The Destruction of the Country House and the Creation of "English Heritage",' *Museum & Society,* 11:1 (2013), 1-18, 5, 14.
[67] Giles Worsley, 'Beyond the Powerhouse: Understanding the Country House in the Twenty-First Century,' *Historical Research*, 78:201 (2005), 423.
[68] Worsley, 'Beyond the Powerhouse: Understanding the Country House in the Twenty-First Century,' 425.
[69] Clive Aslet, *The Story of the Country House,* (London: Yale University Press, 2021), 208-9.

constant, often gallant, but all too often losing battle against taxation and rising costs'.[70] Today, most country houses remain in private ownership, yet the narrative of the country house remains one of loss. John Martin Robinson, the National Trust's Heraldic Adviser who had already served on its North West Regional Committee for a decade and has written for *Country Life* regularly, published *Felling the Ancient Oaks: How England Lost Its Great Country Estates*, in 2012, which details the break-up of estates, similarly to Giles Worsley's earlier *England's Lost Houses* (2002) which focused specifically on material from *Country Life's* archives about country houses which had already been destroyed.[71] In 2015, James Raven's edited volume *Lost Mansions* continued the debate about popular perceptions of country houses and loss across Britain and Ireland.[72]

These texts, along with their authors' other works on country house history, provide important insights into the development of different architectural designs and interior styles. However, because most books about country houses have been written in such sympathetic ways, from people who care deeply about their preservation, historical context can often be subsumed into the narrative of design choices. However, there is a growing country house literature which resituates the country house within its broader history. Peter Mandler's important account, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (1997), documents in detail the changing fortunes of the country house throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, challenging some of the common assumptions about how readily the public accepted the country house as an important element of national heritage.[73] Adrian Tinniswood has also had a broader social focus in his writing about country houses, particularly in his history of country house visiting[74] and his 2021 book, *Noble Ambitions: The Fall and Rise of the Post-War Country House*.[75] Stephanie Barczewski's recent book,

[70] Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History,* (Yale University Press, 1978), 204.
[71] John Martin Robinson, *Felling the Ancient Oaks: How England Lost Its Great Estates*, (Aurum Press, 2012); Giles Worsley, *England's Lost Houses: From the Archives of Country Life*, (Aurum Press, 2012).
[72] James Raven (Ed.), *Lost Mansions: Essays on the Destruction of the Country House*, (Springer, 2015).
[73] Peter Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home,* (London: Yale University Press, 1997).
[74] Adrian Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting: Five Centuries of Tourism and Taste*, (Oxford: Blackwell and the National Trust, 1989).
[75] Adrian Tinniswood, *Noble Ambitions: The Fall and Rise of the Post-War Country House,* (Random House, 2021).

How the Country House Became English (2023), challenges some of the myth-making which has been used to reimagine the country house over the past century.[76] Barczewski tells a longer history beginning with the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the Reformation to challenge the image of the country house as the epitome of stability and tradition which it has come to represent for many. Margot Finn and Kate Smith also highlight that the insistence of claims that the country house is quintessentially English have been shaped by the context of decolonisation and the post-War period as well as the fear of the decline of the country house and the sight of increasing numbers of visitors at National Trust country houses.[77] Mark Girouard famously dubbed country houses 'power houses' in 1978, calling on writers to tell a broader history of the country house and emphasising that country houses are not 'pieces of abstract sculpture, but buildings designed to fit a particular way of life'.[78] The recent edited volume, *Politics and the English Country House*, has taken up Girouard's request for more attention to be paid to this important aspect of their histories.[79] More widely, in addition to the recent interest in colonial history, the country house has been used to explore themes of identity, including women's experiences of the country house[80], Irish country houses[81], and Jewish Country Houses.[82] The study of the country house in relation to empire introduces a more critical lens through which to understand it. While questions

[76] Stephanie Barczewski, *How the Country House Became English,* (London: Reaktion Books, 2023).
[77] Margot Finn and Kate Smith, 'Introduction,' in Margot Finn and Kate Smith (eds.), *East India Company at Home, 1757-1857*, (London: UCL Press, 2018), 4-5.
[78] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 12.
[79] Joan Coutu, Jon Stobart, and Peter N. Lindfield, (eds.), *Politics and the English Country House, 1688-1800,* (McGill -Queens University Press, 2023).
[80] See for example Judith S. Lewis, 'When a House is Not a Home: Elite English Women and the Eighteenth-Century Country House,' *Journal of British Studies*, 48:2 (2009), 336-363; Briony McDonagh, *Elite Women and the Agricultural Landscape, 1700-1830*, (London: Routledge, 2018); Terence Dooley, Marve O'Riordan, and Christopher Ridgway (eds.), *Women and the Country House in Ireland and Britain*, (Four Courts Press, 2018).
[81] Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland: A Study of Irish Landed Families, 1860-1960*, (Wolfhound Press, 2001); Terence Dooley and Christopher Ridgway (Eds.), *The Irish Country House: Its Past, Present and Future,* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2011); Terence Dooley and Christopher Ridgway (eds.), *The Country House and the Great War: Irish and British Experiences,* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2016); Terence Dooley, *Burning the Big House: The Story of the Irish Country House in a Time of War and Revolution*, (Yale: Yale University Press, 2022).
[82] See the Jewish Country Houses Project website, https://jch.history.ox.ac.uk/about-0, accessed 9 September 2023; Oliver Cox, 'Jewish Country Houses and Country House Studies,' *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 18:4 (2019), 513-519; Leora Auslander, 'The Modern Country House as a Jewish Form: a Proposition,' *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 18:4 (2019), 466-488; Abigail Green & Juliet Carey, 'Beyond the Pale: The Country Houses of the Jewish élite,' *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies,* 18:4 (2019), 393-398.

of class and gender have been more readily subsumed into the existing narrative of the country house, colonial history necessarily broadens the question of what the country house represents and what its purpose is to an international one. Furthermore, in relation to the re-creation of the country house as a heritage site in the twentieth century has drawn more criticism than the history of the country house itself, as detailed in the following section.

Heritage Debates

Running in parallel to the 1980s country house revival, however, was increasing criticism of the vision of British heritage which had emerged as one dominated by the English country house. While the tax cuts brought in by Margaret Thatcher allowed the country house to enjoy a revival of private ownership, the rapid growth of the heritage sector in this period also saw the English country house become a central image of historic Britain, and one that was closely associated with the National Trust. David Cannadine suggests the cult of the countryside and the country house reached 'epidemic proportions' in this period, and that this saw 'unbridled (and often uninformed) nostalgia' at play.[83] The popular BBC adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited* came out in 1981, coinciding with the romanticised vision of British rule in India seen in the "Raj Nostalgia" of Charles Allen's popular radio series and book, *Plain Tales from the Raj*, and the television adaptation of M. M. Kaye's 1978 novel, *The Far Pavilions* in the 1980s. This was also the period in which the National Trust cemented its place as a large-scale institution with a sizeable commercial wing to its activities, which brought further criticism of what kind of history it was seen to be selling to the public. The National Trust was seen by its critics as an increasingly commercial institution commodifying and promoting a conservative view of the British past that seemed insular and reactionary. In 1980 the National Heritage Act came in, establishing the National Heritage Memorial Fund, which replaced the 1946 National Land Fund, which had been created as a form of memorial to people who had died in WWII and had helped to fund the transfer of many of the country houses that went to the National Trust. This was followed up by the 1983

[83] Cannadine, 'The First Hundred Years,' 24.

Heritage Act, which created the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, soon renamed English Heritage, and made it a non-departmental public body. At this time, the concept of "national heritage" emerged and became more widely used, and the country house was specifically labelled "heritage" for the first time.[84] Cannadine notes that the term "stately home" was increasingly used over "country house" at this time, perhaps reflecting their perceived transformation from predominantly private spaces to a more abstract public good.[85]

A larger debate took place about heritage, which often centred on the country house and referenced the National Trust as an influential organisation that had become somewhat synonymous with country house visiting. David Lowenthal's *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (1985) is an influential and wide-ranging account of how the past is understood in the present.[86] Robert Hewison's *The Heritage Industry* (1987), also argued that heritage was being used to promote a sanitised, commercialised image of the past, largely imposed on the public by the powerful and catering to middle-class interests and sensibilities.[87] Lowenthal's follow-up, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (1998), contributed further to this idea. In Raphael Samuel's term, 'heritage-baiting' became popular, with academics, journalists and other commentators competing to expose heritage bodies and museums as commodifying history in problematic ways.[88] Paula Weideger's *Gilding the Acorn* (1994), also offered an exposé-style account of the Trust, filled with anecdotes and conversations with former country house owners who were often disappointed by their experiences of Trust management and a sense of the charity as being the same old boys club it had been in the 1960s.[89] An almost conspiratorial way of describing heritage became popular: heritage was being used by the ruling elites to counter the more democratic era Britain had entered post-war, referred to as a project or strategy to further elite interests. To do

[84] Laurajane Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 121.
[85] David Cannadine, *The Decline & Fall of the British Aristocracy*, (London: Penguin, 1992), 647.
[86] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
[87] Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline,* (London: Methuen, 1987).
[88] Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture*.
[89] Paula Weideger, *Gilding the Acorn: Behind the Façade of the National Trust,* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

so, an ideal of Englishness associated with the countryside was imposed on the public's image of the national past, threatening to 'make the country-house version of the national past…hegemonic'.[90] While there was clearly a desire from government and influential heritage bodies at this time to promote a nostalgic vision of the British past, Raphael Samuel counters the claims of critics that only elite histories and motives are present in the heritage sector, demonstrating the more complex, democratic history of many heritage sites and museums.[91]

Providing a more nuanced but still critical view of the National Trust, Patrick Wright argues that its interest in preserving country houses and their collections was a 'laudable concern' but one that was 'shadowed' by a 'reactionary assessment of post-war social and political developments'.[92] As illustrated above, the case which was made for the country house's protection from ruin was partly a cynical one, re-creating the history of the country house to argue for its central place in national heritage. However, Wright emphasises the polarity that has been encouraged around the country house, with the conflict between the country house's aristocratic values and the egalitarian aims of the Trust, in providing public access to them, being embodied by its status as a private company which acts in the public's interest.[93] Country houses were not nationalised, but the Trust's Country Houses Scheme was sometimes understood as being something akin to this.

Both Wright and Samuel also emphasise the need not to treat the people visiting heritage sites as being passive consumers.[94] Whatever vision of the past the National Trust presents is not received in any predetermined way. While Wright notes that some country houses have been used to try and create 'weapons of imperial nostalgia', he emphasises that it seems unlikely that most people visit Trust buildings with the kind of reverence some of its leadership imagined they might.[95] Laurajane Smith's 2006 study, which put forward the notion of Authorised Heritage Discourse,

[90] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 264-5.
[91] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 265.
[92] Wright, *a Journey Through the Ruins*, 88.
[93] Wright, *A Journey Through the Ruins*, 87.
[94] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory,* 271; Wright, *On Living in an Old Country,* 5.
[95] Patrick Wright in conversation with Tim Putnum, 'Sneering at Theme Parks: An Encounter with the Heritage industry,' (1989), republished in Wright, *On Living in an Old Country*, 255.

similarly focused on how certain ideas of the past are presented to the public through heritage bodies which affirm the status quo. In Smith's chapter focused on stately homes, she evidences that National Trust country houses, in combination with representations of country houses in television, film, literature, and other media, reinforce a particular image of legitimate national heritage, but also further investigates *how* people visiting country houses might receive those messages.[96] Smith conducted a survey which saw 454 visitors across six English country houses complete in-depth qualitative questionnaires in 2004. Despite the caveats that not everyone identifies with the more reactionary vision of the country house that is often presented, Smith found that country house visits are 'intimately linked with a very active construction and performance of what it meant to be not only "English", but more specifically "English middle class"', although people visiting these sites are critically aware that they are being shown a representation of the past which is not impartial.[97]

In some ways, the competing visions of Britain's heritage, particularly in the countryside, are simply that. David Matless' *Landscape and Englishness* (1998) importantly demonstrates how the countryside is heterogeneous, far from the caricature which can be painted of the countryside as only being a conservative, reactionary ideal, it has also been the site of modern, progressive actions, as seen, to an extent, with the origins of the National Trust.[98] Matless identifies variations of Englishness which the Trust has employed at different moments, including progressive planning and preservation led by metropolitan expertise, often pitted against the traditional rural authority reflected in Vita Sackville-West's vision of the country house and Englishness as organic beings.

Christoph Ehland and Stephan Kohl's exploration of the National Trust and nostalgia argues that there is a disconnect between the Trust's early years, in which it actively sought to promote nostalgia for an 'ideal and aesthetically pleasing past', producing feelings that the present is

[96] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 126.
[97] Laurajane Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), 117.
[98] David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness*, (Reaktion Books, 2016 [first published 1998]).

'deficient', and its later ones, in which commercialisation has seen a focus on leisure activities over contemplation of the past at its sites.[99] For Ehland and Kohl, this sees a transition from the founding values of the Trust, which used its properties as a way to present a 'social model for the future' rooted in a nostalgia for a preindustrial past. Instead, today there is a marked escapism associated with the National Trust visit, which is not necessarily as deferential as it was hoped to be in the 1950s and 1960s but is not critical either. Peter Mitchell suggests in his account of nostalgia in Britain today that popular period dramas and country house visits are both characterised by a lack of 'any definite historical coordinates…an immersion in a past which is really no past at all, but an imagined space in which one is sheltered from having to live history'.[100]

Stuart Hall stated at the *Whose Heritage?* Arts Council conference in 1999 that while "history from below" had introduced the vernacular, every day, and working-class histories into the accepted contents of "heritage", but stopped short of including histories of people racialised as non-white.[101] Hall emphasised the distinction between the received narrative of the nation and its history and the reality of its lived experience. Despite the continually growing body of books documenting Black British history[102], heritage sites still largely do not reflect the British population. Clara Arokiasamy has specifically documented the lack of tangible progress since Hall gave his widely cited 1999 paper, both in terms of how museums and heritage sites present the past in relation to racial and ethnic minority histories, and in terms of the institutional racism

[99] Christoph Ehland and Stephan Kohl, 'Commercializing Melancholy: The National Trust,' in Martin Middeke and Christina Wald (Eds.), *The Literature of Melancholia,* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 138-140.
[100] Peter Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 81-2.
[101] Stuart Hall, 'Whose Heritage? Un-settling "The Heritage", Re-imagining the Post-nation,' *Third Text*, 13:49 (1999), 3-13, 7.
[102] See, for example, Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*, (1984); Ron Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class,* (1987); David Olusoga, *Black and British: A Forgotten History,* (2016); Miranda Kaufmann, *Black Tudors: The Untold Story*, (2017); Hakim Adi (Ed.), *Black British History: New Perspectives,* (2019); Olivette Otele, *African Europeans: An Untold Story*, (2020); Hakim Adi, *African and Caribbean People in Britain: A History,* (2022).

faced by employees working in them.[103] As seen in the following section, these issues fundamentally shape our collective understanding of the past.

Gaps and Silences

In 2007, Robert Mitchell and Shawn Sobers took part in a collaborative project about Transatlantic slavery called Re:Interpretation, undertaken jointly by Firstborn Creatives, a media production company based in Bristol, and the National Trust.[104] The project focused on Clevedon Court, Dyrham Park, and Tyntesfield, three country houses in the South West of England owned by the Trust. The community groups which took part in the project and visited the houses included the St Paul's Study Centre, Somerset Racial Inclusion Project, Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association, and a group of Bristol residents. At each of the properties, no explicit connection was made to the slave trade by the Trust through its written interpretation or by its room guides, who offer visitors further information about what they are seeing. However, at Dyrham Park 'the starkest visual evidence' of a connection to slavery was seen in stands with sculpted figures depicting enslaved African men with chains connecting their wrists and ankles.[105] Recalling the group's visit, Sobers says they stood in the Balcony Room while the guide 'talked about every single thing in that room…and not once mentioned' the stands, while they stood listening in a narrow walkway facing them.[106] William Blathwayt (1649-1717), the former owner of Dyrham, was described by the National Trust in the 2000s simply as 'a hardworking civil servant', leaving out that he was an active advocate for the slave trade and held multiple related government posts,

[103] Clara Arokiasamy, 'Race Equality in the Cultural Heritage Sector: Perceptions of Progress over the Last Twenty Years and Actions for the Next Decade,' in Susan L.T. Ashley and Degna Stone (eds.), *Whose Heritage? Challenging Race and Identity in Stuart Hall's Post-Nation Britain,* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 39-54.
[104] Rob Mitchell and Shawn Sobers, 'Re: Interpretation: the Representation of Perspectives on Slave Trade History Using Creative Media,' in Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann (eds.), *Slavery and the British Country House*, (Swindon: English Heritage, 2013), 132-3.
[105] Mitchell and Sobers, 'Re: Interpretation,' 134. The pair of 'stands' are listed by the National Trust as: 'Stand,' NT 452977, National Trust collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/452977, accessed 10 September 2023.
[106] Sam Knight, 'Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History,' *The New Yorker*, 16 August 2021, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/08/23/britains-idyllic-country-houses-reveal-a-darker-history, accessed 12 September 2023.

including Head of the Plantation Office, Secretary to the Lords of Trade and Surveyor and Auditor General of the Royal Revenue in Virginia, Jamaica, Barbados, and the Leeward Islands.[107]

Mitchell and Sobers highlight that the silence surrounding this history leads visitors to fill in the gaps with 'replacement myths', which may be inaccurate, especially among younger visitors who may be less likely to have a contextual historical understanding.[108] As highlighted above, people do not passively receive the narrative of the country house, they fill in the blanks for themselves. This is illustrated strikingly by the responses from children to their visit to Dyrham, ranging from the conclusion that 'there were no black people at that time' to the theory that 'the dungeon' was 'where they took the slaves', which was intentionally not shown to them.[109] This is despite Dyrham Park being the former home of a colonial administrator, rather than someone who is known to have directly traded in enslaved people, and who 'never crossed the Atlantic'.[110] More broadly, the British experience of the Transatlantic Slave Trade is marked by this kind of disconnect, particularly because of the prominence of absentee slave-owners, who made up ten per cent of those compensated by the British government at the time of abolition, but owned half the enslaved people represented in those records.[111] In Bristol, with specific regard to slavery, there is a wider history of suspicion about the city's history which has been created in response to the overwhelming silence around slavery. This silence developed historically, with residents believing that enslaved Africans were sold in the city centre and held in the Redcliffe Caves, and that academics were not willing to tell the truth about it.[112] As Mitchell and Sobers demonstrate,

[107] Madge Dresser, 'Slavery and West Country Houses,' in Madge Dresser and Andrew Hann (eds.), *Slavery and the British Country House*, (Swindon: English Heritage, 2013), 38.
[108] Mitchell and Sobers, 'Re: Interpretation,' 135.
[109] Mitchell and Sobers, 'Re: Interpretation,' 136.
[110] 'Colonial Connections at Dyrham Park,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/bath-bristol/dyrham-park/colonial-connections-at-dyrham-park, accessed 13 September 2023.
[111] Legacies of British Slave Ownership findings as reported by Sanchez Manning, 'Britain's Colonial Shame: Slave-owners given Huge Payouts after Abolition,' *Independent*, 24 February 2013, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/britain-s-colonial-shame-slaveowners-given-huge-payouts-after-abolition-8508358.html, accessed 1 October 2023; See also Nicholas Draper, 'Possessing People: Absentee Slave-owners within British Society,' in Catherine Hall, Nicholas Draper, Keith McClelland, Katie Donington, and Rachel Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[112] Mitchell and Sobers, 'Re: Interpretation,' 135.

silence does not simply negate the issue; it directly feeds into collective memory. A study involving over 9,500 secondary school students published in 2016 similarly highlighted how they filled in the gaps in their education about the Holocaust, often leading to misconceptions about the nature of the genocide.[113] The National Trust's Colonial Countryside project contrasts with this, demonstrating that, when proper context to what they are seeing is available, children can of course understand the connections between a country house and slavery or colonial rule.

Later in Dyrham Park's history, Mary Sarah Oates (1833-1925), the daughter of a free woman of colour named Margaret Cross and George Hibbert Oates, a British plantation manager, who had been born in Jamaica, became the lady of the house at the turn of the twentieth century. Hibbert Oates had also fathered four other children with Cross, and another four with multiple different enslaved women. As Katie Donington notes, Mary was born just a year before the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act, meaning that her half-siblings remained enslaved for the first year of her life.[114] In 1840, Mary was sent to England to live in Bath with the Hibbert family, another family with Transatlantic slaving connections.[115] In 1876, Mary married Reverend Wynter Thomas Blathwayt, becoming his second wife and moving into Dyrham Park with him when he inherited it in 1899. Mary's story has recently been highlighted by the National Trust as more details of her life emerged through her diary, when a volunteer was performing an annual inventory check and happened across a diary she had written, a form of what one curator called 'accidental research' that led to new interest in her.[116] A photographic record of Mary also remains at Dyrham, documenting her place in elite British society.

[113] 'What Do Students Know and Understand about the Holocaust? Evidence from English Secondary Schools?' UCL Centre for Holocaust Education, (London: UCL Institute of Education, 2016).
[114] Katie Donington, 'Whose Heritage? Slavery, Country Houses, and the "Culture Wars" in England,' in Stephan Conermann, Claudia Rauhut, Ulrike Schmieder and Michael Zeuske (eds.), *Cultural Heritage and Slavery: Perspectives from Europe,* (Berlin Boston: De Gruyter, 2024), 158.
[115] Katie Donington, *The Bonds of Family: Slavery, Commerce and Culture in the British Atlantic World,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).
[116] Interview with Eilidh Auckland, 28 June 2022.

In contrast, Margot Finn's study of Swallowfield Park in Berkshire tells another story of a landowner's mixed-race, illegitimate daughter, Mary Wilson, who was made to be much less visible than Mary Sarah Oates was. Swallowfield was purchased by Thomas Pitt, Governor of Fort St. George in India, in 1717 and was later purchased by, Sir Henry Russel, Chief Justice of Bengal, in 1820. Finn traces the history of Swallowfield's connections to Asia and the ways the interior décor of the house was influenced by this, noting that visual references to India declined over time.[117] Russell's daughter Mary was born in Hyderabad and named Mary Wilson to hide her paternity. One of Henry's Company friends served as her guardian, and she went to Britain, where she attended a school in Croydon and trained to be a governess. Henry would not allow her to be told who her father was, and she was forbidden from visiting Swallowfield, the latter partly justified by Henry in 1839 because he and his wife's daughters were still unmarried.[118] Finn rightly points to Henry's concerns with lineage; he and his brother Charles had spent decades tracing the family's lineage through successive English generations, highlighting how a desire for a nationally and ethnically "pure" line would have factored in his decisions. As Finn states, 'material legacies of empire were clearly one thing to display, human legacies quite another'.[119]

What I am interested in is the question of how these 'legacies' have continued to be hidden, sidelined, or misrepresented until very recently, as seen at Dyrham Park in 2007. Since then, the Trust has continued to work on this history at Dyrham, writing a pamphlet in collaboration with Madge Dresser explaining Blathwayte's role in the colonies[120], and a 2012 exhibition of contemporary art addressing similar themes called *A World Away*. Mary Blathwayt would have been known about by the Trust since it acquired the house, as she appears in the family tree, and the team at Dyrham had spent years researching her but had not incorporated her story into its interpretation until recently. Simultaneously, the Trust was updating its approach to

[117] Margot Finn, 'Swallowfield Park, Berkshire: From Royalist Bastion to Empire Home,' in Margot Finn and Kate Smith (eds.), *East India Company at Home,* 1757-1857, (London: UCL Press, 2018), 229.
[118] Finn, 'Swallowfield Park, Berkshire,' 229-30.
[119] Margot Finn, 'Material Turns in British History: IV. Empire in India, Cancel Cultures and the Country House,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31 (2021), 1-21, 17.
[120] Interview with Eilidh Auckland, 28 June 2022.

"blackamoors" and other depictions of Black people in its collections. At Dunham Massey, a life-size sculpture of a black man holding a sundial was removed from display while the Trust reassessed if and how it might be redisplayed in the future. At Dyrham, the wording for the sculptures has repeatedly changed in its catalogue over the years, being referred to and described variously as 'Indian', 'Black Boys', 'Blacks', 'stands for flowers', and 'blackamoor stands', and from 2019 as simply 'stand', reflecting the Trust's changing practices and uncertainty surrounding how best to describe them.[121] Christo Kefalas, the National Trust's Curator for Global and Inclusive Histories, is doing crucial work in this area to reevaluate existing language use in the Trust's catalogues and define best practice going forward. h

The historian Olivette Otele states that the National Trust has been known 'by all minority communities as a white environment that was hostile – silently hostile – to people, simply in absentia', and has begun to address the colonial histories of its properties out of necessity more than any sort of generosity.[122] The 'silent hostility' became vocal in the wake of the publication of the Trust's Interim Report in 2020. A backlash against the Trust for simple statements of historical fact has seen criticism from government and relentless media attention directed at the Trust, and particularly the authors of the Report. Corinne Fowler bore the brunt of the backlash, and was repeatedly targeted in the press, receiving huge volumes of hate mail, which she has described as 'a master class in understanding the nation, and where the nation is right now'.[123] The reaction against the Trust was grounded in claims that researching or discussing the history of colonialism falls outside of the Trust's remit and often with a sense that while these things might be true, they are not what visitors want to hear about on a day out in the countryside.

[121] Hannah Lee, 'Serving as Ornament: The Representation of African People in Early Modern British Interiors and Gardens,' *British Art Studies*, 21, (2021), https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/index/article-index/representation-of-african-people-in-early-modern-british-interiors-and-gardens/article-category/article, accessed 21 September 2023.
[122] Quoted in Knight, 'Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History'.
[123] Knight, 'Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History'.

Part of the longer history of hostile responses to the 2020 Report is the critical reaction the Trust got from some of its members in 2007 when it published information about links between some of its properties to slavery in its national magazine.[124] The notion that the Trust's historic houses are not a suitable venue through which to learn about slavery is bound up in the sense that they are escapist for their majority white middle-class visitors. In not drawing attention to these histories previously, the Trust helped to create an imagined version of the country house, free from historic context. The Trust has implicitly recognised this in its repeated linking of diverse histories to diverse audiences which could lead to a conflation. Representing the history of the British Empire accurately is not about making Black people feel more welcome to National Trust houses, it is about being honest. Creating a more diverse National Trust membership is not only about the stories it tells but the ways it tells them, and more generally about the culture it creates at its sites. All of these issues need to be addressed. Historically, the Trust has presented an idealised past through its properties, which Ehland and Kohl note has required a strategic editing out of 'all traces of the imperfections, tensions and problems of the past's reality'.[125] It is not enough to address colonial history additively, diversifying the image of the past. As this thesis will argue, an important element in changing the way that the Trust represents history is to better account for its own institutional history.

As the country house was effectively becoming obsolete as society changed, heritage was the chosen avenue to maintain or create cultural relevancy, and this was done by creating an aesthetic ideal of the country house as something the public wanted to come and see. Research is showing more and more the extent of the country house's relationship to colonialism. As other histories are being explored, a more critical view of the country house is growing, challenging the escapist idealistic vision of country house life that has been promoted through heritage organisations like the Trust and through popular culture. However, an understanding of exactly how the Trust came

[124] Madge Dresser, 'Legacies of British Slave Ownership: Facing a Difficult Past,' in David Cannadine and Jeremy Musson (Eds.) *The Country House: Past, Present, Future,* (New York: Rizzoli, 2018), 344.
[125] Christoph Ehland and Stephan Kohl, 'Commercializing Melancholy: The National Trust,' in Martin Middeke and Christina Wald (eds.), *The Literature of Melancholia,* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 135.

to present the past in the way it does is lacking. This thesis explores the history of how the Trust has presented the past.

Methodology & Approach

Overexposure

The research project that led to this thesis has been profoundly shaped by the circumstances of the COVID-19 Pandemic. I began my DPhil in October 2019, working with the brief attached to my Collaborative Doctoral Award, which outlined examples of photographs taken in British colonies from the National Trust's collections. Over the winter, I considered various properties I could focus on and became interested in using Kedleston Hall, an eighteenth-century neoclassical mansion in Derbyshire, as the focal point of my study (see Image 8 in the Appendix). It came into National Trust ownership, along with the majority of its contents in March 1987.[126] Kedleston is the family seat of the Curzon family and was home to Lord George Curzon (1859-1925), who was most famously known as Viceroy of India from 1899-1905. A museum containing part of Curzon's collection of objects from across Asia and the Middle East, where he had travelled widely before becoming Viceroy, was planned by Curzon and installed in the basement at Kedleston posthumously. The most prominent photographs in the collection at Kedleston are the photograph albums on display in the museum, ornate ones which document the Delhi Durbar of 1903, which was held to mark the coronation of Edward VII and his new title as Emperor of India. A huge collection of photographs associated with Curzon was transferred to the British Library from Kedleston in 1976 when the house was transferred to the National Trust, with further material acquired in 1992. Early in 2020, my supervisors and I began to discuss an initial visit to Kedleston to scope out what other photographs were still there. The Pandemic and the resulting national lockdowns together with social distancing restrictions meant I would not make it to Derby until November 2021. By that time, the project had fundamentally had to change.

[126] National Trust Annual Report 1987, (London: National Trust, 1987), 9.

Over the first year of my PhD, spent mostly indoors, I read about the history of photography and its use in colonial contexts. I had little contact with the Trust; most of its sites were closed and many curatorial staff, including my supervisor, were furloughed. This left me reliant on the Trust's public collections website, which had little information about the Trust's photographic collections. Being unable to gain much understanding of what I would (maybe) see at Kedleston at some undetermined point, I began to wonder what a PhD thesis about a set of photographs I could not see might look like. Given the themes of my research project – who from the past is seen, by whom, and how? – this posed an interesting dilemma when researching an individual like Curzon, whose life is so well-documented, for him to be rendered almost invisible, even if only temporarily. I became interested in more theoretical questions about the photographs out of necessity and was particularly interested in this idea of what from the past is visible at any given time.

As I prepared my first assessed piece of writing, I was reading about the history of the Trust to gain some context for its acquisition of Kedleston and was struck by the Trust's history. I was interested in the occasional references to the British Empire made in books about it, as well as by the fact that most authors who have written histories of the Trust have worked at the organisation. To me, it seemed that if the Trust was going to be able to really address the colonial histories in its collections, it surely needed to understand how it had come to neglect them. This is, of course, a much bigger need across arts and education organisations, but, as the controversy around the Trust's 2020 Interim Report on colonial history grew, it became particularly pertinent to understand why people felt that the Trust had nothing to do with the Empire. As I began to look more deeply into the history of the Trust, what I found out was not that colonial history had been wholly neglected in the Trust's presentation of its country houses, but that parts of it had. The National Trust has always told the history of the British Empire, as the following chapters show, but in a partial way. Specifically, connections to slavery might be alluded to or ignored, while artefacts from India displayed prominently but with little context.

I do not come to this subject matter as an outsider. I grew up visiting National Trust houses, and they were one of the first ways I became interested in the past. I liked looking at old things as much, if not more, than I did learning about how they were used and when. My first memory of going to Beningbrough Hall, a Georgian country house owned by the National Trust since 1958, is a school trip much like those described by Raphael Samuel in *Theatres of Memory,* dressed up as Victorian servants to learn how they used to wash clothes.[127] Growing up near York, a city in the North of England still partly encased in Roman walls, I was surrounded by very old things and took them for granted. I do remember visiting York Castle Museum as a child in 2007 and seeing its exhibition marking the Bicentenary of the Abolition of Slavery, possibly because the subject matter felt shocking and alien. I don't think what I took away from it was any sense that this was part of Britain's heritage, and therefore my own, in the way that Beningbrough Hall clearly was, and certainly no sense that other houses which look like Beningbrough were so intimately connected to the slave ship model I had looked at in the museum. As seen above, the Trust was only beginning to publicly acknowledge these connections itself at this time.

It was partly my proximity to the Trust that led me to focus on the themes I have and to reflect on how the Trust has told history to families like mine for generations now. Being a white, middle-class, English woman, combined with my status as a PhD student at the University of Oxford working in collaboration with the National Trust, has meant I have been granted access to archives and been able to get in touch with people working at the Trust with relative ease. In turn, there are parts of this thesis which I am much more removed from. Having never visited Kolkata or Agra, or Virginia, I am reliant on the accounts I have drawn on for descriptions of them and the monuments in each location I discuss. I have not attempted to tell the stories of Indian or Black people here, as much as this is overdue given the Trust's resources and collections. As noted above, the cohort of PhD students I am part of is pushing forward with this work as I write, but, as we have noted in conversations with each other repeatedly, the difficulty of getting around the

[127] See Samuel's essay 'Pedagogies' in *Theatres of Memory*, 279-280.

presence of the houses' patriarchs has been more than we anticipated. For me, my strategy became to embrace this problem by focusing on it.

In the same vein as Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1982), Durba Ghosh's discussion of how archivists understood and responded to her research interests in Britain and India demonstrates the ways that states use history in their national narratives, which in turn shapes the histories researchers produce.[128] How Ghosh's research was interpreted and responded to in the state archives was in part determined by these ideas, as was her positionality as a high-caste Indian woman doing academic research, and this shaped the assumptions on the part of archivists about what documents were relevant to her studies. In India, Ghosh met resistance to her study of sexual relationships between Indian women and British men – and specifically, denial that Hindu women would have engaged in these - whereas in Britain this was met with enthusiasm as a history which would support the multiculturalism of the 2000s. As Ghosh states, 'the futures that are being imagined by these nations require an acceptable past'.[129] This account reflects the particularity of archives and the work they are there to do. As Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz argued in 2002, archivists anticipate the needs and interests of their presumed audiences or users, and as those change, their practices need to be updated.[130] As J. J. Ghaddar and Michelle Caswell also summarise, at its most powerful, the power of the archive is to determine what it is a serious object of study; in Michel-Rolph Trouillot's terms, what is 'thinkable'.[131]

Trouillot's theory that the production of history is inherently about silencing is instrumental to understanding this. Dividing the production of the past into four stages: firstly the process of events in which historical sources are created, secondly the assembly of facts in archives, thirdly the retrieval of facts and creation of narratives, and fourthly the retrospective awarding of

[128] Durba Ghosh, 'National Narratives and the Politics of Miscegenation: Britain and India,' in Antoinette Burton (ed.), *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, (London: Duke University Press, 2005).
[129] Ghosh, 'National Narratives and the Politics of Miscegenation,' 33.
[130] Terry Cook and Joan M. Schwartz, 'Archives, Records, and Power: From (Postmodern) Theory to (Archival) Performance,' *Archival Science,* 2 (2002), 171-185.
[131] J. J. Ghaddar and Michelle Caswell, '"To Go Beyond": Towards a Decolonial Archival Praxis,' *Archival Science,* 19 (2019), 71-85.

significance to information as History.[132] At each of these stages, silences are introduced which fundamentally shape our understanding of the past. While Trouillot was mostly talking about the process of history writing, clearly this is useful for thinking about heritage sites and the ways in which collective memory forms more broadly. The lack of prioritisation among historians regarding the history of slavery in Britain until relatively recently is important to note and has to be understood in relation to the ways that that history unfolded and was recorded. When Nicholas Draper began his research into slave ownership and compensation in the 2000s, he requested 650 Treasury files at the National Archives and found that many appeared untouched, their original silk ties still in place.[133] Those untouched bundles of papers embody Trouillot's notion that 'any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences'.[134]

I want to place significance on the status of the National Trust as an institution rather than a group of people. While the individual moments I detail in this thesis were shaped by the individuals who worked with or for the Trust at any one time, I am identifying how this changed the organisation's institutional practices. As this thesis demonstrates, the way that the past is represented by the Trust today is shaped by a long history. For the Trust to change how it presents the country house, it must address long standing practices. In this sense, the critique I am providing is not directed towards a 'they' but an 'it'. In the same way that archives place constraints on the histories we can tell, so do museum practices.

This thesis consciously draws on Ann Laura Stoler's notion of reading along, rather than against, the archive even though 'the grand narratives of colonialism have been amply and excessively told' already.[135] In this sense, I am interested in *how* colonialism has been naturalised and normalised, as much as I am in disrupting it. To account for the colonial past and the parts of it which continue

[132] Michel Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Beacon Press Books, 2015 [originally published 1995), 26.
[133] Knight, 'Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History'.
[134] Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 27.
[135] Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 50.

in the present, there is a need to refocus our attention on the figures who have been celebrated as its figureheads. By this, I do not mean that they should continue to be the centre of the story, the ones who are personalised and best remembered, with marginalised groups being anonymised and only understood as victims. My argument is that it is because these people have always been centred in the story of Empire, and there are so many accounts of their lives, they are not very well understood. The broader problem of modern history – that there is too much information to try and parse out and digest – is similar in the case of individuals who ensured that their memory would be much bigger than that of a single person. Some of those larger-than-life individuals' statues feature in this thesis, all of which can be found within a few miles of each other in London: Robert Clive, George Curzon, Winston Churchill, Queen Victoria, and George Washington.[136] While trying to tell the history of colonisation from the perspective of the colonised often means dealing with a lack of information, analysing the actions of the coloniser means trying to find reality between the statues and hagiographies.

This thesis argues that the reassessment of prominent historical figures is a priority for the National Trust because it is an organisation which for so long has implicitly and explicitly celebrated the "great man" view of history. This is rooted in its foundation; Octavia Hill was strongly influenced by Thomas Carlyle and at the National Trust's first Executive Committee meeting in 1895 it was proposed that it should raise funds to buy Carlyle's House in Chelsea, though it was not acquired until 1936.[137] The Trust had previously contributed to campaigns to preserve historic houses associated with famous individuals, including Shakespeare and Turner's former homes. As Melanie Hall has suggested, the founding council of the National Trust was influenced directly by Carlyle, who had helped inspire the movement to preserve historic houses across Europe and North America. Within two decades of Carlyle's 1841 essay *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, several of the men he discussed, including Shakespeare, John

[136] I have not included images of all these statues in this thesis, but Images 15, 16, 17 and 18 in the Appendix show several statues of Queen Victoria and Lord Curzon in India and Britain.
[137] Waterson, *The National Trust*, 31.

Knox, and Goethe, all had house museums dedicated to their memories.[138] The role the Trust has played in celebrating individuals in British history has been huge, and this particular method of celebration, in which the former home becomes a monument, is an interesting one as it uses personal items and spaces to contribute to a mythologisation of these individuals. This creates a more personalised impression of the individual in question, while still presenting them as being larger than life, with everyday objects taking on new significance because of their association with that person, a very different form of monument than a statue in a town square.

Like individuals connected to the Transatlantic Slave Trade, East India Company men often 'worked to erase or obscure the provenance of their wealth', having used it to gain the money needed to buy or build country houses.[139] Between five and ten per cent of British elites featured in the slave compensation records from the 1830s, and their wealth was sustained into the latter part of the century and invested in cultural and educational institutions, as well as in private and public art collections.[140] These findings reflect, as Dan Hicks emphasises, that this is not a discussion of 'legacies' but of 'durations' in the sense that Stoler writes about.[141] Stoler suggests that the scholarly 'romance with "traces" risks rendering colonial remnants as pale filigrees' which are benign and cannot be detected, resulting in an understanding of colonialism as something which haunts the present rather than continuing to materially affect it.[142] Instead, duration offers an expression which better attests to the past's impact on the present. Hicks uses this concept to frame museums as 'devices for extending events across time'.[143] None do this more literally than the country house which continues to house the descendants of its former owners, as many National Trust properties have since the Country Houses Scheme began.

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[138] Hall, 'The Politics of Collection,' 349.
[139] Margot Finn and Kate Smith, 'Introduction,' in Finn and Smith, *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857,* 8-9.
[140] Nicholas Draper, 'Possessing People: Absentee Slave-Owners within British Society,' in Hall, Draper, McClelland, Donington, and Lang, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
[141] Dan Hicks, *Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution,* (London: Pluto Press, 2020), 220.
[142] Ann Laura Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times,* (London: Duke University Press, 2016), 6.
[143] Hicks, *Brutish Museums,* 15.

We know that archives do not present history in any sort of totality, and photographs, similarly, do not offer an exact record of a moment in time. Photography's indexical quality has historically been perceived as lending itself to attempts to control time as well as space: to "fix" a person or an object in a single moment and place, much like the placing of cultural artefacts in glass cases in museums did. Whereas photographs of (wealthy) Europeans were meant to show their specificity, presenting their individual identities, typically photographs taken of the racialised Other were created to homogenise and mould them into typologies, in the same ways that categories of objects were developed in the museum.[144] Relatedly, the caption of a photograph can be an attempt to fix its meaning.[145] They offer another example of the endurances Hicks talks about.[146] Mark Knight and Lesley McFadyen evocatively demonstrate how the photograph is not a frozen moment in time.[147] Furthermore, photographs, like any other object, physically change depending on their age and condition, in ways that affect how we understand them. The idea that exposure to light is what makes and destroys the photograph – that it makes the subject visible but eventually erases it, reflects how we might understand the past. By figuratively or literally over-exposing a photograph, we can change what it is possible to see, as I previously explored in relation to a photograph of George Curzon on a hunting trip.[148] In copies of the photograph, the Indian beaters and bearers, who facilitated his ability to accurately shoot the tiger that lies at his feet in the image, are difficult to make out. However, by digitally editing a copy of the image and exposing it further, they become a little easier to see, while Curzon and his wife, Mary, were obscured as their faces were whitened out. This is not erasure, but a way of making it possible to

[144] Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs,* (Reaktion Books, 1997), 52-3.
[145] Ali Behdad, *Camera Orientalis: Reflections on Photography of the Middle East*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2016).
[146] Lesley McFadyen and Dan Hicks (eds.), *Archaeology and Photography: Time, Objectivity and Archive*, (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020).
[147] Mark Knight and Lesley McFadyen, '"At Any Given Moment": Duration in Archaeology and Photography,' in Lesley McFadyen and Dan Hicks (eds.), *Archaeology and Photography: Time, Objectivity and Archive*, (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2020).
[148] Rebekah Hodgkinson, 'Overexposed: Looking Around Photographic Texts and Imagines in the Archive,' *Archaeological Review from Cambridge,* 36:2 (2021), 31-44.

see the image differently. Perhaps it is one form of what Nicholas Mirzoeff proposes as 'looking back'[149], attempting to be able to see the beaters and bearers, and to see them looking at us.

Susan Sontag suggested that over-exposure to images of other people's suffering numbs us to their pain, and I think something similar happens when we see the same images of powerful "heroic" figures too: we no longer really see them. Over-representation is not the same thing as under-representation, but it does serve to obscure the past in its own way. Powerful people, like the Curzons of the world, are over-represented in the historical record. While there is a priority to try and recapture the voices, or images, of people who were prevented in some way from leaving their own records, there is also a need to reassess the 'great men' of history. We may understand the fundamentals of their stories more easily, being able to name them and place them at various points in time, access some of their opinions and ideas, and even picture them based on visual records and descriptions. But the sheer wealth of material attached to some people, and the myths which surround them, make them difficult to see. In a country house filled with records and belongings, it might feel like we can see the past. What we really see is a representation, a particular perspective, or even sometimes an argument for what the past would have looked like. We are not transported back in time; we stand in the present, looking at what has endured.

Susan Stewart describes ruins as 'visible signs of what once existed but no longer exists, parts indicating their missing wholes'.[150] The country house turned heritage site is a strange sort of ruin in that it does not admit it is one, having been rescued from obsolescence by the concept of heritage itself. As discussed above, country houses are an over-represented form of heritage in Britain. The banality of the country house, despite its monumentality, as described by Laurajane Smith, is reflected in its ubiquity in the English landscape and their presentation to visitors without context; one of the defining parts of how country houses are presented is with minimal

[149] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality*, (Duke University Press, 2011).
[150] Susan Stewart, *The Ruins Lesson: Meaning and Material in Western Culture*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 33.

interpretive material.[151] The country house is constantly on display on TV in period dramas, but how is it seen? While recognising Samuel's note that the country house image of the past is not hegemonic in the way it is often imagined[152], its presence in British culture and its international image, is often a warped one. Stoler notes that the colonial-era homes transformed into heritage sites and hotels around the world act as 'comforting affirmations that colonialisms are over', freezing the places as 'icons of a shamed and distant past'.[153] Similarly, Trouillot emphasises that a focus on the past can work to divert our attention from how it lay the foundations for present injustices.[154] In Britain, this feels most applicable to the way that Abolition has been mythologised, making it strangely difficult to talk about Britain's leading involvement in slavery or the ways that racism was reinscribed post-Abolition.

While the focus of the content of this thesis has moved significantly away from being about photographic collections, it might inform the way we look at the country house and its collections going forward. Fatima Manji has described visits to stately homes as having a shared 'rhythm' despite their distinct histories.[155] There is a certain way of looking that is, or was, expected to be employed by the visitor. Right now, the country house is beginning to be seen.

Why Curzon?

In choosing to focus on Curzon, several relevant elements of his story make him a good fit for this thesis, namely his investment in the visual spectacle of colonial government most prominently expressed through his oversight of the Delhi Durbar of 1903. I originally chose to study Curzon because of the photographic collection associated with him, and there is still much to be written about the albums in the Curzon Collection at the British Library. Curzon placed weight on his

[151] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 126.
[152] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory,* 281.
[153] Stoler, *Duress,* 5.
[154] Rolph-Trouillot, *Silencing the Past,* 150.
[155] Fatima Manji, *Hidden Heritage: Rediscovering Britain's Lost Love of the Orient,* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2021).

photographs, considering his photo albums to be 'treasured personal mementos'.[156] However, as the focus of this thesis shifted from a photographic focus, Curzon's support for the National Trust and his investment in historic monuments meant he became an even more compelling case study. It is his particular interest in the representation of the past that made Curzon a good example to use for the argument I am making about the Trust, but there are many other case studies I could have used. In thinking about who is over-represented through the Trust and why, sits at the intersection of colonial politics and historic preservation.

Lord Curzon (1859-1925) was a statesman who believed strongly in British imperialism and was particularly invested in British rule in India. He is already a well-known figure for his prominent political career, outlined in brief here to illustrate the kinds of issues he was invested in and some of the key events he oversaw during his time in government. In 1886 Curzon was elected MP for Southport but spent much of the next ten years travelling in Russia, Persia, Korea, Afghanistan and other countries across Asia and the Middle East. During his travels, Curzon wrote for *The Times* and published several books about the countries he visited[157], and studied the source of the Amu Darya (Oxus River), for which he was awarded the Royal Geographical Society's Patron's Medal. Curzon was made Under-Secretary of State for India from 1891-1892 and Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs between 1895-1898. In 1899, Curzon was made Viceroy and Governor-General of India aged forty. Curzon's viceroyalty saw widespread administrative reform, and he was known for being controlling and detail obsessed, working long hours and being unable to delegate. Curzon was particularly concerned with the possibility of Russian advances into India and in 1901 he created the North West Frontier Province as part of a buffer zone bordering Afghanistan. His obsession with protecting Britain's Indian territory culminated in his attempt to establish British influence in Lhasa and end Tibet's isolation by sending in a mission to meet with

[156] James Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, (London: Reaktion Books, 1997), 111-2.
[157] See: George Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (1892); *Problems of the Far East* (1894); *Russia in Central Asia in 1889 and the Anglo-Russian Question* (1899).

Tibetan leaders.[158] The infamous expedition to Tibet led by Francis Younghusband in 1903 was an invasion which saw thousands of Tibetans killed.

In 1904, Curzon was reappointed Governor-General, and in 1905 Curzon oversaw the partition of Bengal, a policy he justified as being to improve administrative efficiency, but which has been seen widely as an example of divide and rule politics which sparked protest and reinvigorated the Indian independence movement, which Curzon was largely dismissive of. The Partition was reversed in 1912. Curzon's repeated clashes with Kitchener, Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, led to his resignation and return to England in 1905. In 1906, Curzon's first wife, Mary, died, and for several years he remained out of politics. During the First World War, Curzon returned to government, being appointed Lord Privy Seal by Prime Minister Asquith, and from 1916 he served as Leader of the House of Lords in Lloyd George's War Cabinet. In 1919, he was made Foreign Secretary, and during his tenure was involved in negotiations and treaties during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Egyptian independence, and the division of the British Palestinian Mandate. In 1923, Curzon expected to be made Prime Minister, but Bonar Law chose Stanley Baldwin as his successor instead and Curzon remained Foreign Secretary until January 1924. Just a year later, Curzon died. This overview only provides snapshots of Curzon's career because his overall career is not the focus of this thesis.

As well as his role in formal politics, Curzon was involved in the arts in numerous ways. Curzon was invested in the maintenance and creation of public historic monuments, as part of the wider movement in the twentieth century to memorialise British colonialism in real time. He is perhaps best known for the restoration of the Taj Mahal he oversaw in the 1900s, and the twin project he devised in the creation of the Victoria Memorial, both of which are discussed in detail in Chapter Three. Curzon was also involved in historic preservation in Britain, primarily through the acquisition and restoration of historic houses, including Bodiam Castle and Tattershall Castle, both of which he left to the National Trust in his will (see Images 5 and 7 in the Appendix). Before

[158] Alex McKay, 'The British Invasion of Tibet, 1903-04,' *Inner Asia,* 14:1 (2012), 5-25.

going to India, Curzon and Mary had rented the Priory, a country house near Reigate. Upon their return, the Curzons considered leasing Warwick Castle, but after Mary's death Curzon abandoned this idea and rented Hackwood, an eighteenth-century house in Hampshire, from 1907 until his death. Number 1 Carlton House Terrace, built in 1830, was his London residence until his death, close to St James's Park, Parliament, and Buckingham Palace. In 1916, Curzon leased Montacute House in Somerset, and began buying Elizabethan furniture to fill it with, and in 1917 bought Bodiam Castle and its estate, both of which he set about restoring. Curzon also inherited Kedleston in 1916 and began working on a programme of restoration and adjustments. He supported the National Trust's work to protect scenic outdoor spaces from development as well as historic buildings.[159] Today, the Trust owns Bodiam, Montacute, Tattershall, and Kedleston.

As there are several properties connected to Curzon now owned by the Trust, he has a particularly large place in the Trust's memorialisation of historic figures, making him a useful person to think through some of these issues with. There is a clear need to move beyond him as an individual and use the collections associated with him to tell different histories at the National Trust. Curzon is not the only member of his family represented by the National Trust through Kedleston, but he is a key figure highlighted in guidebooks and other materials produced by the Trust. The Trust is rightly making steps to rework the display of the Museum at Kedleston and to use it to showcase South Asian craftmanship and tradition, rather than keeping it as a room that tells the story of Curzon's travels and celebrating British rule in India. Crucial to this change is the research currently being conducted by Charlotte Johnson.[160]

The Rest of the Thesis: Sources, Scope and Structure

The archives I've drawn on for this thesis are mainly those owned by the National Trust. The Trust's archive is particularly dispersed as its properties are spread across England, Wales, and

[159] Gilmour, *Curzon*, 397.
[160] Charlotte Johnson, 'Imperial Connections: Re-examining Kedleston Hall,' (University of Birmingham), PhD Thesis forthcoming.

Northern Ireland and lots of documents associated with particular properties have often been transferred to local record offices, making them easier to access for more people but disconnecting them from the context in which they were put together. The institutional archive of the National Trust itself is currently without a permanent home; it is held in a storage facility and available to order to National Trust offices to be viewed. Other material is available through the National Trust's headquarters at Heelis, in Swindon. I viewed the archival material I have drawn on at the National Trust's London office and at Kedleston Hall. Achille Mbembe's suggestion that the 'archive has neither status nor power without an architectural dimension' takes on even more significance when it is located in a country house.[161] While critical studies of archives have emphasised their role in colonial bureaucracy[162] and the naturalisation of events (articulated through the metaphor of sedimentation, as Juan Ilerbaig has explored[163]), the focus of this project is in a distinct context from official state archives, instead looking at an institution which helps to invent the nation through rural and domestic spaces.

At Kedleston Hall, archival material remains in the original muniment room alongside some of the family's personal archive and this arrangement fundamentally shapes how a researcher engages with the archive, having to ensure that they are avoiding private, family-owned items between those they are entitled to study.[164] A common experience which others have shared with me, is that at a historic house archive you can often be nudged towards items relating to the house and its design; if you want to see photographs, you will often be offered pictures of the house and grounds before anything else. In contrast, at the British Library, the archive forms part of the government's official record of the past. In the Curzon Collection there are albums dedicated to official state visits as well as family snapshots. The main other archival material I have drawn on

[161] Achille Mbembe, 'The Power of the Archive and Its Limits,' in Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh (Eds.), *Refiguring the Archive*, (Springer Dordrecht, 2002).
[162] See, for example, Bhavani Raman, *Document Raj: Writing and Scribes in Early Colonial South India*, (University of Chicago Press, 2012).
[163] Juan Ilerbaig, 'Archives as Sediments: Metaphors of Deposition and Archival Thinking,' *Archival Science*, 21 (2021), 83-95.
[164] See Image 14 in the Appendix to this thesis for a photograph of the muniment room at Kedleston Hall.

has been through online newspaper archives. In addition to archival research, I conducted several interviews with National Trust curators who were generous with their time and thoughts. These interviews were conducted online through video calls and in person at Trust houses in 2021, and largely centred on how curators working regionally have approached colonial history in the collections they work with.

This thesis covers the period roughly from 1895 to 2020. It is not within the scope of a doctoral thesis to comprehensively detail over one hundred years of history; I use different periods of the Trust's history to explore trends and changes in its work. The chapters are thematic but move through the period chronologically. The National Trust works across England, Wales, and Northern Ireland but I am mostly focused on locations in England because the Trust is based in London and most of its property is in England, including Kedleston Hall in Derby. My focus on Curzon takes the thesis to India, specifically Kolkata and Agra as key sites for British historic preservation. The Transatlantic connections I detail are mostly based in the East Coast of the United States, though Jamaican connections are more briefly explored, too.

This thesis explores some of the ways that colonialism has shaped historic preservation in Britain through the history of the National Trust and the ways it has represented history through its historic houses and associated collections. I consider these themes predominantly in Britain, but with examples and comparisons in the United States and India too. What has essentially come from studying this topic, is a sense that understanding the representation of colonial history in historic houses has to come with a deeper sense of how colonialism shaped the preservation of those houses in the first place. The thesis is arranged somewhat episodically, and alternates between chapters focused on the Trust and on Curzon as separate but related case studies. There are six core chapters to this thesis, organised thematically.

Chapter Two picks up on some of the early history of the National Trust detailed in this introduction. It goes into more detail about the Trust's early years and how its founding council saw the preservation of historic sites in Britain in relation to imperialism. In particular, this

chapter introduces the Trust's relationship with preservationists in North America. The chapter finishes with an overview of the Country Houses Scheme and how this changed the Trust's role from the 1930s onwards.

Chapter Three is the first chapter focused on Curzon. This chapter introduces his relationship with the National Trust and considers his role in historic preservation and monument creation in India and England. This chapter demonstrates that Curzon's experiences in India informed his approach to British heritage, not only in the ways he saw the British past in relation to the creation of the Empire, but that specific policy in India influenced British preservation policy.

Chapter Four continues to explore the National Trust's Transatlantic interests and how they continued from the early 1900s into the 1950s with the creation of the US-based National Trust for Historic Preservation. This chapter details visits taken by National Trust representatives to Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia and also explores other examples of national trust organisations which have been set up globally.

Chapter Five looks at the Country Houses Scheme in more detail and considers the ways that the transformation of the country house into a heritage site changed the way it is seen and looked at. It details some of the arguments made for country house preservation and includes comparisons with the preservation of plantation houses in the United States.

Chapter Six is the second chapter focused on Curzon and it explores how he has been remembered and memorialised in Britain. Specifically, it considers how he has been represented by the National Trust at Kedleston Hall in the context of Indian history more broadly, which I argue has been engaged with repeatedly since it opened to the public, but in temporary ways.

Chapter Seven considers the backlash against the Trust's publication of its Interim Report on the histories of colonialism and slavery in its historic houses. This chapter seeks to historicise the ongoing controversy surrounding the Trust and colonial history, demonstrating that similar

controversies have come before, and proposing that long-standing contradictions in the ways the Trust defines itself have shaped them.

The concluding chapter, Chapter Eight, proposes that to do justice to the colonial histories which the Trust is rightly beginning to engage with more critically than it has in the past, it needs to consider its own role in promoting the country house without addressing them previously. The Trust needs to understand its own role in creating an image of the British countryside in idealised ways, and recognising how this has itself sustained a colonial vision of Britain.

As much as the COVID-19 Pandemic shaped this project, so did the Black Lives Matter movement and the protests of 2020, particularly the removal of the statue of Edward Colston from its plinth in Bristol, and the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in Oxford, which first began in Cape Town in 2015. The argument of this thesis was in part formed by the actions of activists, which made newly visible what for a long time been normalised. As Dan Hicks and Nicholas Mirzoeff have articulated, the twin movements of fallism and restitution are part of a longer history of African-led decolonisation, which are dismantling the statues which monumentalise once-powerful individuals across the former British Empire and the '"White" Atlantic', and the museum displays which objectify Black people.[165] A fundamental shift is taking place in terms of how British people understand and relate to their imperial history, and this thesis offers a small contribution to that change. Perhaps more so, the defensive backlash against these movements has shaped this thesis. When the National Trust published its Interim Report in 2020 and the press and government responded with condemnation, the scale of the attacks, and on what would typically be portrayed as such a benign institution, was surprising. The National Trust seemed to represent something that some people wanted to protect from calls for decolonisation, or to weaponise as a tool in the so-called Culture War. My theoretical approach to this thesis has been shaped by the literature drawn on in this chapter, but the individual chapters are predominantly focused on the specifics

[165] Dan Hicks and Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'Fallism and Restitution: Removing Racist Statues and Returning Looted Art Objects,' *New African,* 17 August 2020, https://newafricanmagazine.com/23931/, accessed 20 September 2023.

of the history I am telling about the Trust. The primary contribution of this thesis is to show how colonialism has shaped the National Trust and the ways it presents British history for the past 125 years. In doing this, the thesis also challenges current thinking about country houses as heritage sites. The history of the British Empire is not another story that can be subsumed into an existing narrative of country house; the two are fundamentally intertwined.

Chapter 2 Contextualising the National Trust and Colonialism

Quebec House in Westerham, Kent, is a mid-sixteenth-century house which was given to the National Trust in 1917.[1] It was the childhood home of General James Wolfe (1727-1759), who is best known for having led British forces in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham (1759) against the French Army during the Seven Years War, in what would become Canada. Wolfe died in battle, and the house, which had previously been known as Spiers, was renamed Quebec House in Wolfe's honour.[2] Over one hundred years after Wolfe's death at the beginning of the twentieth century, Mr Joseph Bowles Learmont, a Canadian man, purchased the house, intending to turn it into a memorial to Wolfe. Learmont died before he could complete its transformation and his wife, Charlotte Smithers, transferred Quebec House to the National Trust. In his history of the Trust, John Gaze lists Quebec House and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's cottage at Nether Stowey, Somerset, acquired by the Trust in 1909, as the earliest examples of houses accepted by the Trust because of their association with famous individuals.[3] Coleridge (1773-1834) was a Romantic poet, and his place in the national literary canon is what drew the Trust to preserve his house, whereas the association with James Wolfe at Quebec House is not only a memorial to an individual man but a monument to the British Empire.

This chapter introduces some key aspects of the National Trust's history which demonstrate that its founders and early supporters understood the national history it was preserving as an imperial one, as illustrated by the example of Quebec House. The first section of this chapter discusses the house and its collections in more detail, using it as an example of an early National Trust property which was being used to commemorate a key moment in the development of the British Empire and to play an educational role in informing visitors of this history. The second section of this chapter considers this phenomenon within a wider context, exploring how the Trust discussed its

[1] A photograph of Quebec House taken in 1900 is provided in the appendix.
[2] 'The History of Quebec House,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/quebec-house/the-history-of-quebec-house, accessed 1 October 2023.
[3] Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape,* 158.

mission as something which was related to imperialism. In its early years, the National Trust was engaging with contemporary ideas about historic preservation as a patriotic activity that could encourage imperial identity among the British public and the citizens of Britain's colonies, as well as in the United States as a former part of the Empire. This chapter builds on Melanie Hall and Astrid Swenson's research, showing that the preservation movement across Europe and North America influenced the Trust in its early years.[4] Swenson problematises the common assumption that state interventions are always motivated by a desire to foster nationalism or that they do so in straightforward ways, arguing instead that it is often nationalism which was drawn on to *persuade* the state to intervene, among other motivating forces, of which the National Trust was a clear example.[5] Hall has demonstrated the Trust's continued interest in North American history and its collaborations with preservationists in the United States from its founding into the 1940s. Expanding on their work, I explore how the National Trust was shaped by international networks from its founding, particularly through its relationships with other preservationists in the United States. The final section of this chapter details the creation of the Country Houses Scheme, which was the Trust's official programme of country house acquisition, in the 1930s. A core theme of this chapter, and this thesis, is of heritage being related to ancestry. While the North American connections to Britain described here relate to imperial history and ideas of racial lineage, the Country Houses Scheme served aristocratic ideals of inheritance and the continuation of family lines. Covering the early period of the Trust's history in this chapter provides a context for the rest

[4] Melanie Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting: The Early Aspirations of the National Trust, 1883-1913,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6:1 (2003), 345-357; Melanie Hall, 'Plunder or Preservation? Contesting the Anglo-American Heritage in the Later Nineteenth Century,' in Peter Mandler and Astrid Swenson (eds.), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire c. 1800-1940*, (Proceedings of the British Academy, 2013); Melanie Hall (ed.), *Towards World Heritage: International Origins of the Preservation Movement, 1870-1930,* (London: Routledge, 2016); Melanie Hall, 'Octavia Hill and the National Trust,' in Elizabeth Baignet and Ben Cowell (eds.), *"Nobler Imaginings and Mightier Struggles": Octavia Hill and the Remaking of British Society,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Astrid Swenson, *The Rise of Heritage: Preserving the Past in France, Germany and England, 1789-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler (eds.), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire c. 1800-1940*, (Proceedings of the British Academy, 2013); Astrid Swenson, '"To Every Landless Man, Woman and Child in England": Octavia Hill and the Preservation Movement,' in Elizabeth Baigent and Ben Cowell (eds.), *"Nobler Imaginings and Mightier Struggles" Octavia Hill, Social Activism and the Remaking of British Society,* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2016).
[5] Swenson, 'Historic Preservation, the State and Nationalism in Britain,' 47.

of the thesis, which will discuss the Trust's US connections and the impact of the Country Houses Scheme in greater detail.

What do people who go to Quebec House go to see?

From the time of his death, General Wolfe was memorialised in multiple ways, with images of him circulating widely in Britain from the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth. Described by Carole McNamara as potentially the most celebrated painting in eighteenth-century England, Benjamin West's 1770 painting, *The Death of General Wolfe,* depicts Wolfe's death with the battle scene in the background.[6] The painting shows Wolfe in his military uniform rather than the classical dress which was typical in similar paintings in this period, and the picture's backdrop showed English viewers a vision of North America being conquered. The Wolfe memorial at Westminster Abbey, created in 1772, also depicted Wolfe's death, as did several other paintings, including George Romney's 1763 painting. Wolfe was also portrayed in poems, songs, and other visual arts, becoming a national hero and being commemorated in people's homes as well as in public settings. As Stephanie Barczewski has highlighted, commemorations to individual military heroes were common in country houses at this time, often intended to boost family status, such as at Shugborough in Staffordshire, where Admiral George Anson's victories were depicted in stucco bas-reliefs added to the home by his family.[7] After the Seven Years War, it became more common to celebrate military individuals without a familial connection, and in the case of General Wolfe 'country house owners enthusiastically participated' in the 'outpouring of patriotic sentiment' which followed his death, adding memorials to him in their estates.[8] The wider circulation of objects depicting Wolfe, such as the metal tray with a copy of West's *The Death of General Wolfe* printed on it from the mid-nineteenth century in the Trust's collections[9], continued

[6] Carole McNamara, *Benjamin West and the Art of Empire,* (Michigan: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2013).
[7] Barczewski, *Country Houses and the British Empire,* 199.
[8] Barczewski, *Country Houses and the British Empire,* 201.
[9] 'Tray,' Object number NT528993, National Trust collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/528993, accessed 1 September 2023.

into the twentieth century, as seen in the example of the 1959 Wedgewood jug commemorating the 200th anniversary of Wolfe's death.[10]

In the early twentieth century, more monuments to General Wolfe were created, including statues of him unveiled in 1911 near Quebec House in Westerham, and at Greenwich, London, in 1930.[11] When Quebec House was transferred to the Trust in 1917, it was described as a 'shrine for Canadians'[12] and in 1918, the 2nd Duke of Westminster gifted West's *Death of General Wolfe* to the Canadian War Memorials.[13] During the First World War, Canadian battalions laid their flags on the Wolfe memorial at Westminster Abbey, and two have remained there since a ceremony in 1922.[14] In 1937, the National Trust recorded that £350 had been donated by the Drapers Company to create a Wolfe Library at Quebec House, and Sir Campbell Stuart, a Canadian newspaper magnate who worked in propaganda roles for the British government and sat on the Wolfe Memorial and Quebec House Committees, had presented some objects including prints of Montreal to add to the collections on display at Quebec House.[15]

One purpose of opening Quebec House to members of the public to visit was for them to learn about the history of the British Empire. In 1917, the Trust wrote about Quebec House in its Annual Report as a place intended to be 'accessible to all interested in the history of the British Empire'.[16] At that time, this history was told as a celebration of conquest and Wolfe's life. Today, the National Trust's website explains that the Learmonts intended for the house to be displayed as it may have

[10] 'Wedgewood Juge,' Object number NT528879, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/528879, accessed 1 September 2023.
[11] A photograph of the unveiling of the statue in Westerham is in the Trust's collections at Quebec House. See: 'Unveiling of the Wolfe Memorial,' Item number NT529101, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/529101, accessed 10 April 2022.
[12] Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape,* 158.
[13] 'The Death of General Wolfe' National Gallery of Canada website, https://www.gallery.ca/collection/artwork/the-death-of-general-wolfe-0, accessed 1 September 2023.
[14] 'James Wolfe,' Westminster Abbey website, https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/james-wolfe, accessed 10 April 2022.
[15] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1936-1937, (London: National Trust, 1937), 22.
[16] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report of the Council for the Year 1916-17, (London: National Trust, 1917), 8.

looked in Wolfe's lifetime, telling his life story and creating 'a place that celebrates early Canadian history'.[17] Through the display of the collections at Quebec House, Wolfe is incredibly personalised, and the focus of the house is more on his life than on the colonisation of Canada, which is largely told in military terms given Wolfe's role in it. Some later additions to the Trust's collection have included model figures attributed to the company Hussar Military Miniatures, dated c. 1990. These include models of General Wolfe, Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Saunders, Mr. James Cook, and other anonymous British and French military figures, as well as two figures depicting First Nations people. One is now identified on the National Trust's Collections website as representing a Wyandot person, labelled by the manufacturer as a 'Huron Indian'.[18] The other figure is described by the manufacturer as a 'Woods Indian' and at the time of writing the Trust's entry for this item suggests that these names may be intended to refer to 'the Indigenous peoples of the North-eastern Woodlands, a grouping which includes the Iroquois Confederacy, who allied themselves with the British in the conflict'.[19] The military figures, presumably purchased in the 1990s given their dating, are displayed in the house alongside Wolfe's uniform and other items, reducing indigenous peoples to illustrations of Britain's military history. The addition of these figures to the collection suggests that for nearly a century, the Trust had continued to tell a similar story about Wolfe and Canada.

The way that visitors learned about the creation of Canada at Quebec House was mostly through seeing objects associated with Wolfe. Mr. A. E. Wolfe-Aylward, a descendant of General Wolfe, lived with his wife at Quebec House and continued to after it was transferred to the National Trust.[20] His collection of objects associated with General Wolfe were transferred to the National Trust in

[17] 'The History of Quebec House,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/quebec-house/the-history-of-quebec-house, accessed 25 February 2023.
[18] 'Huron Indian', Item number NT529045, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/529045, accessed 11 April 2022.
[19] 'Woods Indian,' Item number NT529044, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/529044, accessed 11 April 2022.
[20] 'Wolf Aylward Invite at Home to Wounded Soldiers,' Westerham Heritage website, https://www.westerhamheritage.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/wolfe-aylward-invite-at-home-to-wounded-soldiers, accessed 30 March 2023.

the 1930s and include a painting of Wolfe by J.S.C. Schaak, and a portrait of his mother, Henrietta Thompson, and numerous prints and documents relating to Wolfe's life and career. Some of the objects in the Trust's collection are personal items which had been handed down through the family, such as Wolfe's snuffbox, his field canteen, and his dressing gown. The mythology built around these items adds to Wolfe's celebrity. It was thought that Wolfe's body had been brought back in the gown after his death, a claim which is now described as improbable in the Trust's description of the item. The Trust's collection at Quebec House also includes a cloak previously belonging to Wolfe.[21] Another cloak once owned by Wolfe is seen in a pair of photographs in the National Trust's collection, which are copies of original photographs now held at the National Army Museum.[22] The cloak pictured in these photographs is listed on the Royal Collections Trust's collections website and has also been claimed as the cloak he lay on as he died.[23] Further examples of objects connected not only to Wolfe but specifically to his death are found in the collection. There is an example of a bayonet from the time Wolfe went to Canada and a piece of timber from a French ship, presumably taken during the battle, and even a piece of stone said to be the one Wolfe laid his head on when he was dying.[24]

From the 1930s, the National Trust described Wolfe-Aylward's collection as "Wolfania", which appears to be being used in this context similarly to "Canadina" [sic], which was the word it used to describe other collections which came with Quebec House when it was first donated. "Canadina" is presumably being used like "Canadiana", to refer to distinctly Canadian cultural

[21] 'Powder Cloak,' Item number NT529190, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/529190, accessed 29 March 2023.
[22] 'Wolfe's Field Cloak,' Item number NT529086.2, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/529086.2, accessed 29 March 2023; 'Wolfe's Field Cloak,' Item number NT529086.1, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/529086.1, accessed 29 March 2023.
[23] 'General Wolfe's Field Coat,' Object number RCIN31955, Royal Collections Trust website, https://www.rct.uk/collection/31955/general-wolfes-field-coat, accessed 29 March 2023.
[24] 'Bayonet,' Item number NT528992, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/528992, accessed 11 April 2022; 'Ship Timber,' Item number NT529211, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/529211, accessed 11 April 2022; 'Stone,' Item number NT529166, National Trust Collections website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/529166, accessed 11 April 2022.

phenomena, similarly to "Americana" for cultural symbols in the United States. Learmont's collection Canadiana was described as 'specimens of the native work of the Indians in the Canadian North-West, and pictures and prints illustrating the progress and growth of the Dominion'.[25] The objects created by First Nations peoples referred to here do not seem to appear in the National Trust's collections website today. The "Wolfania" became part of the appeal of the house for visitors, referred to by the Trust in its description of the property in many of its annual reports, and creating an equivalent term for objects associated with Wolfe to those associated with a country suggests the extent to which he was being made larger than life.[26] The desire to have an authentic, physical connection to Wolfe, particularly one tied to the events which led to his fame as a heroic figure, is significant. The repeated attempts to link items of clothing to Wolfe's death reflect a desire to create a greater physical connection between the house and its collections to the moments which turned him into an imperial hero.

Wolfe-Aylward wrote a book about General Wolfe in 1926. He described Quebec House as a 'fine old Tudor dwelling' which was likely to have features remaining from an older house, a 'noble' panelled drawing-room, oak staircase and column balustrades, a hall with a stone fireplace, and dining-room with a similar grate, 'surmounted by Arms of Henry VII'.[27] The location of the house was used in Wolfe-Aylward's account to mythologise Wolfe and contribute to his status in English history. From inside Quebec House, the road can be seen which formed part of the Pilgrim's Way route, which was taken to visit Thomas Becket's tomb at Canterbury Cathedral after Becket was canonised in 1173. Wolfe-Aylward also notes that the road is a Roman one used by Caesar's soldiers and runs through typical English countryside, from where an individual came 'whose deeds gave England a Western Empire which has ever since produced a new field for the energies, courage, and ambitions of our race'.[28]

[25] National Trust Report of the Council for the Year 1916-17, 7-8.
[26] See for example The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1933-1934, (London: National Trust, 1934), 86.
[27] A. E. Wolfe-Aylward, *The Pictorial Life of Wolfe*, (Plymouth: William Brendon and Son, Limited, 1926), 2.
[28] Wolfe-Aylward, *The Pictorial Life of Wolfe*, 2.

It seems that Quebec House was intended for people to visit and feel connected to General Wolfe more than it was for them to learn anything substantial about Canada. In the 1910s and 1920s, anyone visiting Quebec House would have presumably known who Wolfe was and had an interest in seeing his home, having grown up hearing about him as an imperial hero. Typically, we imagine people seeing monuments to figures like Wolfe in city centres and towns, but in the village of Westerham, General Wolfe is not the only military leader being memorialised. The statue of Wolfe stands at one end of the village green, and at the other, there is a statue of Winston Churchill, erected in 1969. The Churchill monument is in Westerham because his former home, Chartwell, which is also owned by the National Trust, is close to the village. Most National Trust properties do not have the explicit connections to colonialism that Quebec House does or use it as their main point of historical significance. However, from its foundation, the Trust saw its role in preserving historic places, whether in the form of open land or historic houses, as not only being for the benefit of people living in Britain's towns and cities, but for them and their fellow imperial citizens to visit and learn about their ancestry. This is reflected in the Trust Council's hope that people visiting England from abroad for the Coronation of King George VI in 1937, might visit Quebec House.[29] The National Trust was, from its foundation, telling a story about who is British and what that means.

Contextualising The National Trust

The National Trust was founded in 1895, in a period of rapid expansion among European powers, the United States, and Japan that characterised the New Imperialism between 1870 and the First World War. Jenifer Jenkins and Patrick James nod to the moment in which the National Trust emerged: the landed classes were turning to American wealth through marriage and art sales in the face of death duties and the 1870s agricultural depression, and Britain was in competition with America and Germany for industrial pre-eminence.[30] In this context, the founders of the

[29] National Trust Annual Report 1936-1937, 22.
[30] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 2.

Trust and other preservationists were concerned about the living conditions of people in growing urban areas and the protection of the countryside and its traditions. Formed out of Octavia Hill and Robert Hunter's work for the Commons Preservation Society, a group which campaigned to protect common land from development, the National Trust was established specifically to acquire land and buildings and maintain them as places 'for recreation and instruction'.[31] The founders' motivations to ensure access to green and historic spaces for the growing working-class population in the cities, particularly London, is well-known, as is the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement on the types of buildings they sought to preserve and the style of conservation they adopted. Hill did not theorise her work extensively, but in *Our Common Land* (1877) had critiqued the extent of land owned by a tiny minority, albeit 'in more acceptable language' than Morris' writing, expressing a willingness to collaborate with landowners and to align the Trust with the establishment.[32]

The three founders of the National Trust were Octavia Hill (1838-1912), Robert Hunter (1844-1913), and Hardwicke Rawnsley (1851-1920). Hill was raised by parents who were interested in social reform, and from the age of fourteen she worked at the Ladies Guild, a Christian socialist cooperative in London which her mother managed, and began to meet other influential reformers such as F. D. Maurice and John Ruskin. Ruskin mentored Hill, lending her the money to fund her influential housing reform work. Hill also set up the Kyrle Society with her sister, Miranda, which was created to provide working-class people with greater access to art, music, literature, and open spaces. The Kyrle society also overlapped with the Open Spaces Society and the National Trust, having successfully campaigned for the protection of open spaces and the preservation of disused graveyards as parks. Hunter grew up in London and saw for himself how quickly the city was being changed by development. He studied law at University College, London and became solicitor for the Common Preservation Society and was involved in famous cases against enclosure at

[31] Ben Cowell, 'For the Benefit of the Nation: Politics and the Early National Trust,' in Elizabeth Baignet and Ben Cowell (eds.), *Octavia Hill, Social Activism and the Remaking of British Society*, (London: University of London Press: Institute of Historical Research, 2016), 307.
[32] Swenson, '"To Every Landless Man, Woman and Child in England,"' 196.

Epping Forest, Dartford Heath and Hampstead Heath. He became honorary legal adviser to the Kyrle Society and was involved with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, as well as helping to get preservation legislation passed, including the Ancient Monuments Protection Act. His legal expertise meant he was instrumental in the setting up of the Trust and the creation of the 1907 National Trust Act, which made its land inalienable. He described the Trust, significantly, as a 'National Gallery of natural pictures'.[33] Rawnsley studied at Balliol College, where he met Ruskin and became interested in social reform. When he was living in London and working as a lay preacher, Ruskin introduced him to Hunter and Hill. Rawnsley was influential in the movement to protect the Lake District from overdevelopment and became vicar of Wray, near Windermere, while continuing social reform work in the local area and founding the Lake District Defence Society. Rawnsley was well travelled, having visited the Alps, the United States, Egypt, and Russia, and at one point was offered the bishopric of Madagascar but declined to continue his work in the Lake District. Rawnsley became Honorary Secretary of the National Trust when it was founded, and he continued to be prominently involved in its work until his death in 1915.

The Trust's early acquisitions were almost entirely small, rural, and folkish.[34] Preservation movements developed across Europe and North America in the nineteenth century in response to industrialisation and urbanisation, which saw massive population movement from the countryside to industrial towns and cities. As the traditions of the countryside seemed to be in decline, the rapid expansion of towns and cities also threatened the historic buildings within them. The Trust mostly acquired sites as examples of national and regional traditions. However, the Trust's rhetoric and choice of acquisitions demonstrate an interest in history that went beyond the parochial national context with which it has often been associated. It sought to

[33] 'A Proposed National Trust,' *The Times,* 17 July 1894, 12, The Times Archive, retrieved from: https://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive/article/1894-07-17/12/4.html#start%3D1784-12-31%26end%3D1985-01-01%26terms%3Dproposed%20national%20trust%20%26back%3D/tto/archive/find/proposed+national+trust+/w:1784-12-31%7E1985-01-01/1%26next%3D/tto/archive/frame/goto/proposed+national+trust+/w:1784-12-31%7E1985-01-01/2, accessed 1 September 2023.
[34] Hall, 'Octavia Hill and the National Trust,' 239.

preserve historic spaces with an understanding that this history belonged to citizens across the Empire who could understand these spaces as part of their heritage. As seen with Quebec House, this was done through explicit references to the development of the Empire, as well as a more general sense that citizens of the Empire shared the same cultural, and in the case of white settlers, racial, ancestry, rooted in the British landscape. While Paul Readman has emphasised that Octavia Hill's patriotism was not an explicitly imperial one, being focused on English needs over British ones, it does seem that given the permeable nature of national and imperial identities, this would not have been a hard distinction.[35] Melanie Hall argues that the appeal and influence of ideas about Empire and Englishness such as J.R. Seeley's "Greater Britain" (1883) 'form a significant, but overlooked – or even suppressed – strand of thinking underpinning the formation of the National Trust'.[36]

Hall suggests that the 'invented communities' fostered by preservation groups 'expressed not only national, but colonial identities', and that the Trust included the British Empire's white settler population in its definition of the "nation".[37] The National Trust's Council made this explicit in an 1896 Report, directly connecting its work to the ongoing expansion of the British Empire:

> 'England, without the places of historic interest or natural beauty that are continually being threatened, would be a poorer country and less likely to attract and hold the affections of her sons who, far away, are colonising the waste places of the Earth.' [38]

The National Trust Council saw part of its responsibility as being to promote patriotism across the Empire, and in the United States, through a sense of shared ancestry embodied by historic places. The Council stated that the Trust's work was 'true patriotism' and suggested that if

[35] Paul Readman, 'Octavia Hill and the English Landscape,' in Elizabeth Baigent and Ben Cowell (eds.), *Octavia Hill, Social Activism and the Remaking of British Society*, (London: University of London Press, 2016), 167.
[36] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 346.
[37] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 351.
[38] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, Report of the Council from March, 1896 to July 1896, (London: C. F. Roworth, 1896), 12-13.

successful, they would attract support from America.[39] Hardwicke Rawnsley, by this time secretary of the National Trust, gave a lecture to the Birmingham branch of The Ruskin Society, which had formed in 1896, in 1899, which was published in the Society's new journal*, Saint George*. In his lecture Rawnsley, described the Trust as 'a kind of Patriotic League' and connected the 'true love of fatherland' fostered in Germany and France to their successful preservation of historic monuments, alongside the use of folk song and festivals and the celebration of the great men of history.[40] The founders of the Trust saw themselves as not only providing opportunities to enjoy historic and natural spaces to benefit the wellbeing of the working class, but also as contributing to their sense of what their national heritage was, explicitly in relation to an imperial identity.

The National Trust depended on a network of influential and wealthy, often aristocratic, individuals. Robert Hunter was a civil servant himself, working in the General Post Office, and was knighted in 1894, and Hardwicke Rawnsley was involved in local politics in the Lake District. The Trust's most prominent early supporter, whose extended involvement has led John Gaze to suggest he could be considered a fourth founder, was Hugh Grosvener, 1st Duke of Westminster, who was the Trust's first President.[41] Moreover, the Trust had the support of a variety of private and public bodies including the National Gallery, Royal Academy, Society of Antiquaries, and Royal Institute of British Architects, which all had nominated members on its early Council.[42] A third of the founding members of the Trust were Oxford and Cambridge graduates.[43] The Masters of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Balliol College, Oxford, were members of the National Trust's Provisional Council, alongside the President of Magdalen College, Oxford, the Provost of Eton, and the Principal of Owens College, Manchester.[44] Other members of the Council included G. Shaw-

[39] Report of the Council from March, 1896 to July 1896, 12-13.
[40] Rawnsley, 'The National Trust: Its Aims and Its Work,' 113-5.
[41] Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape*, 12.
[42] Cowell, 'For the Benefit of the Nation,' 309.
[43] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 351.
[44] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, Report of the Provisional Council for the Year ending April 30th, 1895, (London: National Trust, 1895), 2.

Lefevre, a former Commissioner of Works, and Sir John Lubbock, 1st Baron Avebury, a banker and Liberal politician credited with bringing about the Ancient Monuments Act of 1882. T. H. Huxley, another Council member, was a biologist and anthropologist and had been Assistant Surgeon to HMS Rattlesnake, taking part in a voyage surveying New Guinea and Australia in 1846.

Individuals who engaged with historic preservation in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries had often had careers related to or directly involved in colonial rule and understood the importance of imperialism's cultural influence in Britain and vice versa. The Provisional Council of the Trust included four former and future Governor-Generals, with the Marquis of Dufferin and Ava having tenures in India and Canada, the Duke of Devonshire in Canada, the Marquis of Ripon in India, and Lord Tennyson in Australia. The Earl of Rosebery was Prime Minister of Britain from 1894-1895, while Lord Hobhouse, the former Queen's Counsel, served as Law Member of the Council of the Governor-General in India in 1872. Sir George Reid was Premier of New South Wales and later became Australia's fourth Prime Minister. The Earl of Carlisle was a Liberal Unionist politician and soldier who served in the Boer War and James Bryce, 1st Viscount, was a Liberal MP who went on to be Chief Secretary for Ireland and the British Ambassador to the United States. Leonard Courtney, 1st Baron Courtney of Penwith, was a former Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, and was instrumental in the work of the South Africa Conciliation Committee.

Preservationist campaigners, including the Trust founders, claimed that Britain was lagging other nations in its preservation legislation to motivate the government to act. A Special Committee was set up in 1894 to address the lack of existing legislation to protect national monuments such as Stonehenge, which Hill, Hunter and Rawnsley sat on alongside John Lubbock, James Bryce, George Shaw Lefevre, and General Pitt Rivers.[45] In its 1896 Report, the National Trust Council wrote that it hoped that 'eventually work of this kind may be recognized by the Government of the country

[45] Cowell, 'For the Benefit of the Nation', 310.

as constituting a claim upon the national purse'.[46] The Trust's relationship with the government is ambiguous, with Cowell suggesting that the organisation was in many ways 'as much a creation of the state' as the Ministry of Works.[47] Hill was politically non-partisan in her approach, which Hall has suggested contributed to the development of the Trust as an institution 'above party politics' with an identity comparable to the church or the monarchy, and its royal endorsement from its founding.[48] However, the Trust worked closely with public institutions from its founding. Later in the twentieth century, the Trust had gained the expertise and influence to advise policymakers on conservation in Britain and internationally.[49] While the political role of the Trust has predominantly centred on promoting preservation, as it grew the Trust also came to have a huge influence on what parts of history are most prominently represented in Britain, shaping national and international perceptions of the country's past.

Increasingly, preservationists framed concern for the protection of monuments as 'a measurement for a country's civilised status'.[50] In 1898, Robert Hunter wrote an article detailing the development of preservation legislation across Europe and North America, suggesting that Britain had less preservation legislation than its peers.[51] Hunter concluded that 'in nearly every country in Europe, the State recognises emphatically that it is its duty to preserve the buildings and remains, whether megalithic, classical, or mediaeval, which embody its history and mark its progress in the arts'.[52] Similarly, a 1904 National Trust pamphlet asked: 'why not nationalise the English Lake District? Canada with its "Banff" in the "Rockies," America with its Yellowstone Park, have shown the way, it is for Great Britain to be wise in time and to follow a good example'.[53] National parks were first developed in the United States, with Yellowstone Park becoming the first

[46] Report of the Council from March, 1896 to July 1896, 13.
[47] Cowell, 'Octavia Hill and the National Trust,' 314.
[48] Hall, 'Octavia Hill and the National Trust,' 220-1.
[49] Nixon, 'Trouble at the National Trust,' 530.
[50] Swenson, 'Historic Preservation, the State and Nationalism in Britain,' 56.
[51] An almost identical report is included as an appendix in the National Trust's Annual Report for the Year 1896-7, see pages 21-25.
[52] Hunter, 'Places and Things of Interest and Natural Beauty,' 582.
[53] Gawbarrow pamphlet attached to The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, Report for the Year 1903-1904 (London: National Trust 1904).

national park in 1872. National parks in the US provided a model which appealed to white settler communities across the British Empire and appealed to the Romantic image of the Lake District in England.[54] The Duke of Argyll, Governor General of Canada 1878-1883 and advocate for imperial federation, proposed that the Lake District should be preserved for 'the inhabitants of the colonies, the great kindred nation on the other side of the Atlantic who in the future might resort here as the home of their leisure'.[55] Princess Louise, the Duke's wife and Queen Victoria's fourth daughter, was the Trust's second President and her Canadian connections aided the Trust's 'culturally federating mission'.[56] As a key example of a non-state organisation with influence over historic preservation, Swenson notes that the National Trust had a 'UK-wide, and indeed imperial and transatlantic remit'.[57] In 1909, there was discussion about the National Trust expanding beyond the UK, when the Colonial Office sent an enquiry to the Trust's Executive Committee proposing that it acquire the twelfth-century keep of the Templars of Kolossi in Cyprus.[58] This acquisition did not come to anything but it directly connects the Trust's work with Britain's imperial interests through its correspondence with the British Government. In the following section, I consider some other examples of connections between the National Trust and international organisations, both governmental and nongovernmental.

The National Trust was formed in the context of a growing international movement for historic preservation, both of historic buildings and landscapes. Although it defined itself as a national body, the Trust's founding Council saw its role not only in terms of promoting preservation locally, but in helping foster an international sense of imperial identity based on British, though predominantly English, heritage. This was most prominently expressed through the Trust's relationship with US preservationists, as discussed in the following section.

[54] Hall, 'Plunder or Preservation?' 259-260.
[55] Hall, 'Octavia Hill and the National Trust,' 235-6.
[56] Hall, 'Octavia Hill and the National Trust,' 236.
[57] Swenson, 'Historic Preservation, the State and Nationalism in Britain,' 53.
[58] Fedden, *The Continuing Purpose*, 14.

Preserving a Shared History: American Ancestry

In its Provisional Report, the National Trust's Council described the Massachusetts Trustees of Public Reservations (MTPR) as 'a society with kindred objects' which 'warmly welcomed' the creation of the Trust.[59] Founded in 1891 by Charles Eliot, a landscape architect and son of the University of Harvard president, the MTPR owns and preserves outdoor spaces classed as having exceptional historic, scenic, or ecological value. In the Trust's founding year, it reported that the MTPR had inspired the creation of the National Trust and had nominated 'one of its most prominent members', Professor C. S. Sargent, to the Trust's Council, beginning a long-standing relationship between the two organisations.[60] The National Trust's constitution was based on that of the MTPR and when celebrating its fifty-year anniversary, the Trust still emphasised the influence of the MTPR on its founding.[61] In its early years, the National Trust's acquisition choices were shaped by US interests, with many places selected for preservation that Americans were known to have emigrated from.[62] This was influenced by a desire to attract North American visitors and patrons and an interest in the joint history of Britain, but primarily England, and the US, but also as part of wider attempts to strengthen Britain and the United States' political relationship throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Drawing on Brian Etheridge's term, Sam Edwards has characterised the period between 1890 to 1925 as 'the first age of transatlantic memory diplomacy'.[63] In this first period, the historic memory which was being promoted across Britain and America was explicitly framed as a white "Anglo-Saxon" one. By the end of the Second World War, the more suggestive term "English-speaking people" generally came to replace "Anglo-Saxon" in line with a broader transformation

[59] Report of the National Trust Provisional Council, for the Year ending April 30th, 1895, 7.
[60] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, Interim Report of the Executive Committee from May 1895 to March 1896, (London: National Trust, 1896), 12.
[61] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1944-1945, (Letchworth: The Garden City Press Ltd., 1945), 6.
[62] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 353.
[63] Sam Edwards, '"A Great Englishman": George Washington and Anglo-American Memory Diplomacy, c. 1890-1925,' in (eds.) Robert M. Hendershot and Steve Marsh, *Culture Matters: Anglo-American Relations and the Intangibles of "Specialness",* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 158.

in the language of racialisation, though it had already been used in this context. The two terms were often used interchangeably and in the Interwar Period "English-speaking" was used specifically to distinguish white Anglo-Americans from Germans[64], and T. G. Otte states that following WWII 'Anglo-Saxon ties hardened'.[65] In this Chapter, the Trust's relationship with American preservationists is understood within this context. As this thesis demonstrates, the Trust repeatedly acquired properties connected to broader attempts to strengthen cultural and political Transatlantic relationships, typically historic houses with connections to famous individuals in US history who had English ancestry.

In 1896, the National Trust reported a 'recent visit of descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers to their old home', hosted by the Executive Committee and highlighted that in the US there was strong and growing support for the Trust's mission.[66] It acquired properties that were the former homes of famous Americans' ancestors, often with the support of US-based preservationists and donors. Hall has detailed many examples of the Trust collaborating with Americans to help preserve historic sites connected to Transatlantic history, usually commemorating an individual, including Thomas Carlyle's home in London, and Harvard House in Stratford-upon-Avon, the sixteenth-century home of the grandfather of John Harvard, benefactor of Harvard University.[67] Hall describes projects like Lowell's Westminster Abbey Memorial as being 'on the fringes of diplomacy during the "great rapprochement"', citing Anglicanism and literature as being key to Anglo-American friendship.[68]

In 1897, the Trust planned a conference in London during a visit from the Colonial Premier for the Queen Victoria's Reign celebration and hoped that representatives of the MTPR would be able

[64] Edwards, '"From Here Lincoln Came",' 36-7.
[65] T. G. Otte, '"The Shrine at Sulgrave": The Preservation of the Washington Ancestral Home as an "English Mount Vernon" and Transatlantic Relations,' in (ed.) Melanie Hall, *Towards World Heritage: International Origins of the Preservation Movement 1870-1930*, (London: Routledge, 2016), 133.
[66] National Trust Report of the Council from March, 1896 to July 1896, 12.
[67] Hall, 'Octavia Hill and the National Trust,' 218; Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 356.
[68] Hall, 'Octavia Hill and the National Trust,' 215.

to attend.[69] In the same year, the Trust reported that its purchase of Barras Head had been helped by 'a subscription of some pounds [which] came from well-wishers in the United States of America'.[70] It was not until 1969 that the Massachusetts Trustees ceased to be a nominating body to the National Trust Council, as part of the broader changes brought about by the Benson Report.[71] However, the Trust Council recommended that, as it was 'helpful for the Trust to be linked with an eminent preservation body in America', the 'link should be maintained by creating an honorary association between the President of the Trustees and the Trust'.[72] In 1899 and 1900, Canon Rawnsley, and Charles Robert Ashbee, Arts and Crafts architect and Trust Council member, visited the US on fact-finding tours. They were hosted by the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society and gave lectures during their visits. Rawnsley's trip led to the enlistment of several local corresponding members and Professor H. W. Rolfe becoming the Trust's Honorary Organising Secretary for the United States.[73] The Trust reported on Ashbee's visit, explaining that:

> 'The Trust has already many correspondents in America, and it is hoped that the relations between those on either side of the Atlantic who desire to maintain the historic associations, and to preserve from destruction the national heritage of natural beauty in the two countries, may grow in strength and intimacy'.[74]

During Ashbee's visit, an American Sub-Committee was nominated to draw up a constitution for an US-based National Trust during a meeting at the British Embassy, and a branch of the Canadian Royal Society, *The Committee for the Preservation of Scenic and Historical Places*, was created.[75] The Trustees of Public Reservations Massachusetts nominated Professor C. S. Sargent to the

[69] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 352.
[70] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report for the Year July 1896-7, (London: National Trust, 1897), 3.
[71] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1968-69, (London: Waterlow & Sons Limited, 1969), 27.
[72] National Trust Report 1968-1969, 27.
[73] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report for the Year 1899-1900, (London: National Trust, 1900), 10.
[74] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report for the Year 1900-1901, (London: National Trust, 1901), 24.
[75] National Trust Report of the Council for the Year 1900-1901, 23-4.

National Trust Council in 1895[76], and from 1901 to 1904 there was a US branch of the National Trust, though I have been unsuccessful in locating correspondence relating to this in the Trust's archives.[77] After this branch had disbanded, the Trust continued to have corresponding members from America listed in its annual reports.

The National Trust was consciously playing a role in the construction of the shared historic memory of Britain and the US. In this way, the Trust was not only working with preservationists in another country to memorialise connected moments in their history, but it was also demonstrating that as nations of people, they had a shared heritage. To reconcile British-American history, the colonial period in the US was romanticised, and key historic figures in the settlement and creation of the nation made into heroic figures. The linking of British, often specifically English, and American history in terms of heritage was often connected to ancestry and family lineage, which was not always explicitly linked to ethnicity but was often a theme by the turn of the twentieth century as the language of race became increasingly codified. This shared past was an "Anglo-Saxon", or white, one.

Ashbee first visited the United States in 1896, where he realised that to engage North Americans in the preservation of English historical buildings, he would need to demonstrate that 'such buildings were living links to what he saw as a common English-speaking heritage'.[78] When Ashbee returned to the United States in 1900 to represent the National Trust, he was not wholly successful in persuading the people he had met to support the Charity. Although the American Arts and Crafts movement, which was most prominent in Chicago, was influenced by the British one, it was generally more commercial and not as closely associated with socialist politics. Martin Danahay suggests that the choice to call the National Trust a "trust" rather than a "company" to appeal to people was less effective in the US.[79]

[76] Nation Trust Council Report for the Year ending April 30th, 1895, 12.
[77] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 356.
[78] Martin Danahay, 'Arts and Crafts as a Transatlantic Movement: C. R. Ashbee in the United States, 1896-1915,' *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 20:1 (2015), 65-86, 72.
[79] Danahay, 'Arts and Crafts as a Transatlantic Movement,' 73.

The focus on medieval buildings within the British movement also made it harder to promote a vision of the past that Americans could identity with.[80] In Chicago, members of the Architectural Club chose not to form the local branch of the National Trust after hearing Ashbee speak. Although he admired the city's industry[81], he claimed that in spite of the natural beauty present, the city typified 'all that a city should not be' because of the heavy pollution from factories and citizens who he claimed 'care not for improving the conditions' and only 'intend to remain there just long enough to make their fortune'.[82] Ashbee also failed to centre the Trust's mission in his lectures, instead focusing on the problems of commercialism and his ideal of citizenship. He held patronising attitudes towards American patriotism and the significant role women were playing in preservation there, later publishing a book of his lectures which contributed to his resignation from the Trust, which refused to be associated with or accept proceeds from the work.[83] In 1900, Ashbee also worked to fundraise the creation of 'a Club House and Bureau of Historical Information, available to all its members from all parts of the English-speaking world'.[84] After his work at the National Trust, he went on to be the first civic advisor under the British Mandate in Jerusalem, continuing his role in historic preservation at an international scale. Ashbee co-founded the Pro-Jerusalem Council to oversee restoration work on the Old City, contributing to the city's transformation into 'a museum or *memorial of itself*', which was 'explicitly based on the principles of the National Trust'.[85]

Over time the idea of a shared past continued to be drawn on in more successful collaborations between the Trust and US preservation organisations. Following Rawnsley's visit to the US in

[80] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*, (Princeton University Press, 1999), 63.
[81] Danahay, 'Arts and Crafts as a Transatlantic Movement,' 73.
[82] 'An Englishman on Chicago,' *Daily Mail*, 20 December 1900, Daily Mail Historical Archive, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/EE1866329398/DMHA?u=oxford&sid=DMHA&xid=beddb4ed, accessed 3 December 2020, 6.
[83] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 355.
[84] C.R. Ashbee quoted in Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 354.
[85] Simon Goldhill, 'The Cotswolds in Jerusalem: Restoration and Empire,' in Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler (eds), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire, c. 1800-1940*, (Oxford University Press/British Academy, 2013), 131-2. Emphasis my own.

1900, the Trust's Council suggested that American interest in 'the natural and historic beauties of England appeal, not only by their picturesque charm, but also with something of the force of home associations, and that a common interest in their preservation may prove a valuable aid to the promotion of international amity'.[86] In a letter to the Editor of the *Boston Globe*, Ashbee wrote that his and Rawnsley's visits to the US were intended to encourage American assistance 'in preserving the great international monuments in the mother country'.[87] More explicitly, he wrote that,

> 'It is hoped the work of the Trust will find support among the English-speaking people throughout the whole world; that the many who look to England as the parent of their own institutions will take the opportunity of helping to preserve her many charms for the enjoyment of the entire race.'[88]

Framed as a race, the people that the Trust was interested in engaging with were also repeatedly defined as "Anglo-Saxon", as noted above. In this period, Anglo-Saxonism developed as a call for collaboration and friendship between people racialised as white with Germanic ancestry, particularly in Britain and the US. Duncan Bell's study of Anglo-Saxonism highlights that the creation of national, racial, and colonial identities were interconnected and could support or conflict with one another. Framed as a biological and cultural connection, here the emphasis on ancestral ties between England and the US is important to the impetus for collaboration over historic preservation.[89] Bell argues that 'citizenship was rearticulated as a form of identification with the Anglo-Saxon or English race' and 'patriotic regard' was too, meaning that 'individuals owed allegiance to a nested set of communities, including their country *and* their race'.[90] We see this in the Trust's early rhetoric regarding Empire, where historic sites in Britain are seen as important for people in the colonies to look "back" at and feel connected to, as well as representing

[86] National Trust Report for the Year 1899-1900, 10.
[87] C.R. Ashbee, quoted in Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 354.
[88] C.R. Ashbee, quoted in Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 345.
[89] Duncan Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).
[90] Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race,* 252. Emphasis my own.

a national identity. In the Transatlantic context, preservationists negotiated the context of America's successful War of Independence by focusing on preserving buildings and objects from the colonial period and reframing the American Revolution as an event that could be celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic. The changing relationship between Britain and the United States is reflected in their interactions with historic preservation in Canada; Hall demonstrates how international collaboration and competition were both present in the preservation of Niagara Falls.[91]

In its early years, the Trust was driven by a desire to preserve a specific form of the English past shaped by a romantic vision of the countryside, but in doing so it also helped to foster that vision by monumentalising small-scale historic buildings representing political, religious and literary traditions in an attempt to 'engage the sentiment of English-speaking people' globally.[92] This was partly down to John Ruskin's influence on the Trust's founders. Most famously expressed in his Slade Lectures on Art, Ruskin believed in the imperial mission as one which would see England 'stamp its character onto its colonial subjects'.[93] The benefits for the population of the nation were regularly stressed, particularly in terms of health, as seen in Ruskin's writings and in the context of Britain's defeat in the Second Boer War.[94] Fear of the "degeneration" of the population was part of the motivation for the preservation of open spaces, as promoted by Octavia Hill and the other early supporters of the National Trust.

The Trust sought to give people living in cities access to fresh air and nature and to engage them with a sense of the national past through their historic preservation. Ian Baucom argues that in

[91] Hall, 'Plunder or Preservation?' 242. Robert Hunter praised the preservation of Niagara Falls and credited Lord Dufferin, Governor-General of Canada and member of the Trust's founding Council, for having first suggested the nationalisation of the Falls. See: Robert Hunter, 'Places and Things of Interest and Natural Beauty,' *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, 43:254 (1898), 570-589, 583.
[92] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 346.
[93] Baucom, *Out of Place*, 55.
[94] Swenson, 'Historic Preservation, the State and Nationalism in Britain,' 55-6.

Ruskin's vision of the nation's past he tried to erase London, to make the public forget it when it was remembering what made them English:

> 'A city that seemed to have become the "savage" waste ground its citizens were supposed to discover, and civilize, abroad; because in looking at the metropolis he saw a city that seemed, uncannily, to situate the imperial "without" inside the national "within".'[95]

The city was contrasted with the supposed purity of the countryside and the vision of a superior rural past contributed to the motivation to preserve and revive its traditions in the late nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Historic preservation in the United States paralleled this, particularly in Boston, where some white citizens responded to increasing numbers of migrants by perpetuating 'limited notions of American identity', which often drew on the Anglicized Transatlantic heritage being promoted in this period.[96]

The Trust's Changing Role: The Country Houses Scheme

The introduction of inheritance tax, or Death Duties, in 1894 marked the beginning of the end for the country house economy and coincided with the creation of the National Trust. At least 1,200 country houses are recorded as having been demolished in England in the twentieth century.[97] The Agricultural Depression of the 1870s resulting from cheap American grain imports contributed to the decline in country-house ownership as it became increasingly unaffordable. The selling off of country houses was further accelerated by WWI and by the Labour Government which raised the top rate of inheritance tax to 50% in 1930.[98] Aristocrats and aesthetes alike feared the extinction of the country house, and it was in response to this that the National Trust's Country Houses Scheme (CHS) emerged in 1936. The CHS came to define the Trust for several

[95] Baucom, *Out of Place*, 55.
[96] Max Page and Randall Mason, 'Rethinking the Roots of the Historic Preservation Movement,' in Randall Mason and Max Page (Eds.), *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*, (New York: Routledge, 2020), 15.
[97] Worsley, *England's Lost Houses,* 7.
[98] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 272.

decades and a strong association with country houses remains today. In 1995, Howard Newby claimed the country house was 'often the irrational focus of attention on the National Trust', but it is important to unpick how the CHS came to dominate its image.[99]

At a National Trust Dinner in 1932 Professor Constable, Director of the Courtauld Institute of Fine Art, 'pleaded that steps should be taken, while there was still time' to preserve England's country houses, suggesting that the finest country houses could be scheduled and given preferential rating and taxation.[100] Two years later Lord Lothian, Philip Kerr, gave a speech to the Trust which is often credited as having inspired the CHS. Lothian had inherited four large properties with a bill for £300,000 in death duties, which he paid for by selling rare volumes from the library at Blickling Hall, the house he later left to the Trust. He proposed criteria to judge which houses might be saved, including the age of the property (a minimum of 100 years); the building being of 'definite historic or architectural merit'; that it should be surrounded by a garden or park; and should be 'suitably furnished and maintained as a dwelling-house'.[101] A sub-division of "big" houses was also suggested, defined as any house meeting the general four criteria and containing a minimum of twenty bedrooms, a 'considerable' park, and numerous reception rooms usually used only for special entertainment.[102] *Country Life* submitted a list of over six-hundred properties meeting the criteria for consideration.[103]

Initially, Lothian and Lord Zetland, Chairman of the Trust, envisaged 'a "Country Houses Association" through which the Trust and private owners would collaborate to 'secure fiscal concessions', inspired by La Demeure Historique.[104] Described by James Lees-Milne as 'a sort of trades union of aristocrats' similar to the Historic Houses Association[105], the group formed in

[99] Howard Newby, 'Editor's Preface,' in *The National Trust: The Next Hundred Years,* 7.
[100] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1932-1933, (London: National Trust, 1933), 8-9.
[101] Philip Kerr, 'England's Country Houses: The Case for Historic Preservation,' Speech given at the National Trust Annual General Meeting, 19 July 1934. National Trust Archive.
[102] Kerr, 'England's Country Houses: The Case for Historic Preservation'.
[103] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 297.
[104] Waterson, *The National Trust,* 108.
[105] James Lees-Milne, *People and Places: Country House Donors and the National Trust,* 12.

1923 to prevent the French equivalent to the decline of country houses in England: 'la grande misère des château de France', or 'the great misery of the castles of France', coordinating the use of tourism to generate revenue covering the cost of maintaining their properties.[106] At first the Government was not prepared to offer tax relief on private houses or to authorise the Office of Works to manage their maintenance. However, in 1935 William Ormsby-Gore, First Commissioner of Works, spoke at the National Trust AGM, giving the first public acknowledgment by the government of 'the cultural value of country houses', and suggesting cooperation between the Trust and owners would be the best option for the country houses "problem".[107] The government presented the Trust with two potential schemes. The first would institute legal changes enabling the Trust to accept houses with Death Duties waived and lease them back to their former owners. The second scheme required the formation of an association of country house owners, potentially linked with the Trust, open to some amount of public control and visiting. The combination of the schemes proved unworkable: many country house owners dismissed the second scheme, whether because they had no need for it, did not want to enter into business, or did not want to share the small income derived from paying visitors and lose 'the cachet of occasional charitable openings'.[108] However, agreements between the Trust and country house owners were reached and new legislation was introduced for the Country Houses Scheme.

The 1907 National Trust Act had stated that the Trust could 'accept property in trust for any public purposes'.[109] In 1937 a new National Trust Act passed unopposed, extending the purposes and powers of the charity to include the promotion of the preservation of buildings of national, architectural historic, or artistic interest.[110] The Trust could accept restrictive covenants without being required to have an interest in adjacent land, encouraging individuals to 'safeguard their

[106] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 81.
[107] Thurley, *Men From the Ministry*, 180-1.
[108] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 303-4.
[109] National Trust Act 1907, available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Edw7/7/136/enacted, accessed 11 September 2023.
[110] National Trust Act 1937, available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Edw8and1Geo6/1/57/enacted, accessed 11 September 2023.

estates from development without divesting themselves of ownership' and, significantly, without an obligation to provide public access to the property.[111] The Trust also created a dedicated Country Houses Committee which became 'a country-house pressure group', with many of its members themselves being country house owners themselves.[112]

The original members of the Country Houses Committee and Sub-Committee included[113]:

- Nigel Bond (the National Trust's Secretary)
- Sir Edgar Bonham-Carter
- Lord Brocket
- the Earl of Carlisle
- Viscount Esher (who would later chair the Committee)
- Sir Alexander Lawrence
- Marquess of Lothian
- Lord Methuan
- R. C. Norman
- Major Michael Peto
- the Marquess of Salisbury
- Professor G. M. Trevelyan
- the Marquess of Zetland (Chairman of the Executive Committee)
- R. M. Holland-Martin,
- Sir Alexander Lawrence
- the Earl of Radnor
- Lord Gerald Wellesley

[111] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 88.
[112] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 300-1.
[113] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1936-1937

As seen in the Trust's early years, the leadership and supporters of the Trust often had political careers and connections, but in this period even more influential establishment officials came to dominate the leadership of the organisation. Some of the colonial careers connected to this list include Sir Edgar Bonham Carter, who was a colonial administrator who had worked in Sudan and Palestine, Lord Methuen who had spent time in South Africa, and Gerald Wellesley who was an Anglo-Irish diplomat and soldier. Lord Zetland, the Trust's Chairman from 1932, was Lord Curzon's assistant during his Viceroyalty from 1900 and wrote his official biography.[114] Though Curzon did not live to see the Country Houses Scheme, this social connection demonstrates some of the links he had to the Trust which are detailed further later in this thesis. Having served as the Governor of Bengal from 1917 to 1922, he became Secretary of State for India from 1935 until 1940 and would regularly invite the Secretary of the National Trust to the India Office to go over Executive Committee meeting agendas.[115] Lord Esher had worked as Lord Morley's private secretary when he was Secretary of State for India between 1905 and 1910, and his brother-in-law was the last Rajah of Sarawak in India.

Lothian, credited with inspiring the Scheme, began his career in South Africa working for the Transvaal Governor and in Johannesburg on the Inter-Colonial Council. A campaigner for imperial federation, he was part of Milner's Kindergarten, and when he returned to England he co-founded the *Round Table Journal*. In 1931 Lothian was made Under-Secretary of State for India. The friendships formed in South Africa formed the basis of the so-called Cliveden Set, a name coined by Claud Cockburn writing in *The Week* claiming that individuals known to spend a lot of time at Cliveden, home of Lord and Lady Astor[116], were part of a political group attempting to influence the British government in the 1930s. Lothian was part of the circle and close friends with Nancy Astor. Norman Rose suggests that the close-knit group were not established as a formal one, but

[114] Lawrence Dundas, Marquis of Zetland, *The Life of Lord Curzon: Being the Authorized Biography of George Nathaniel Curzon of Kedleston, K.G.,* (London: Ernest Benn, 1928).
[115] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 76-77.
[116] The Astors left Cliveden to the National Trust in 1942.

they were largely aligned with one another politically and did have political influence.[117] Lothian was also a member of the Anglo-German Fellowship, formed in 1935, as was Lord Brocket, a member of the Country Houses Committee, who was interned during the War due to his sympathy towards Germany.[118] In 1939 Lothian was appointed Ambassador to the United States, his existing interest in the Anglo-American relationship combined with his support for appeasement making him 'the logical choice to serve as Chamberlain's ambassador in Washington'.[119] After Hitler violated the Munich Agreement by occupying Czechoslovakia in 1939, Lothian changed his view of the Nazi government and its intentions and played an important role in gaining US aid and support in the War. Lothian had also become Vice-President of the Trust in 1939, and the Trust's Council reported that it felt sure it could 'count on his active support on his return from America'.[120] However, he died the following year.

These men were all well-connected and often in the same political and social circles. Donald MacLeod Matheson, a friend of Lord Lothian, was the Trust's Secretary from 1934. Matheson attended Balliol College, University of Oxford, where many colonial administrators-to-be had trained, and worked as a translator, publishing works on world religion. He was also a member of the Round Table Movement and was Lord Lothian's initial point of contact at the Trust.[121] When Vita Sackville-West heard from Hilda Matheson, MacLeod Matheson's sister, at the BBC, that there was an opening at the National Trust in 1936, she recommended James Lees-Milne.[122] He became the Secretary for the CHS and his well-known diaries recount his visits to country houses on behalf of the Trust. Prior to his role at the Trust, in the early 1930s Lees-Milne had been secretary

[117] While the group was never shown to be an official body, members of these circles were politically influential and many aristocrats had sympathetic views towards fascism, or fully embraced it, most famously Nancy Mitford. See Norman Rose, *The Cliveden Set: Portrait of an Exclusive Fraternity*, (Jonathan Cape, 2000); David Cannadine, *The Decline & Fall of the British Aristocracy*, (London: Picador, 1992), 545-555.
[118] Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-9,* (Faber & Faber, 2015), 185.
[119] Nicholas John Cull, *Selling War: The British Propaganda Campaign Against American Neutrality in World War II*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 20.
[120] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1939-40, (London: National Trust, 1940), 2.
[121] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 296.
[122] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 301.

for George Lloyd, 1st Baron of Lloyd, a Conservative politician and member of the India Defence League, a lobby group that campaigned against Indian Home Rule.

The Trust began accepting estates, or parts of them, as a means of endowment which were to be 'managed like any ordinary agricultural estate' using the same agents where possible or leasing it back to the 'occupier of the mansion'.[123] Moreover, 'endowment land would not be held inalienably for the benefit of the nation and the public would have no special right of access to it'.[124] It soon became clear that it was incredibly difficult to transfer a house that was already part of a private trust to a public trust. Lord Esher promoted a new bill in the House of Lords to 'make it easier for life tenants of settled estates to hand over to the Trust' and the 1939 National Trust Act addressed entailed estates.[125]

During its peak period of country house acquisition between 1940 and 1969, the National Trust gained 78 country houses by gift or bequest through their former owners, and those which came with estates contributed large amounts of land to its growing holdings.[126] The success of the CHS came partly from the role that the Trust had created for itself in its early years as the caretaker of national history separate from the government and any potential nationalisation that private owners feared. The CHS was created out of negotiation between private owners inside and outside of the Trust. The Council described the Trust as a 'quasi-public body independent of direct State control', and suggested that in future public appeals would form a smaller part of its work, reflecting the shift in priorities the Trust was undergoing.[127] The Scheme was introduced at a time when the Trust's leadership became more Conservative, accentuating its "aristocratic tinge".[128] R.E. Norman, head of the Trust's Finance and General Committee, predicted that country house

[123] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1936-1937, 2.
[124] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1936-1937, 2.
[125] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 305.
[126] Cannadine, 'The First Hundred Years,' 20.
[127] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1941-2, (London: National Trust, 1942), 7.
[128] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 95-6.

owners would 'have more confidence in the National Trust if it were run by one of them'.[129] By the 1960s, the Trust was run by 'aesthetically inclined aristocrats' and experts recruited from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge or leading cultural societies, meaning the CHS was negotiated between private owners inside and outside of the Trust.[130] Advocates for the Scheme were explicit about their aims: speaking in the House of Lords, Lord Zetland suggested that the 'whole object of the National Trust is to enable [owners] to see their residences and their grounds and properties maintained and to occupy them for life'.[131]

Robin Fedden, the National Trust's Secretary, outlined how the Country Houses Scheme worked in practice by the 1960s as follows.[132] If the owner of a country house offered their house and its contents to the Trust, hoping to remain in residence and for their heirs to do the same, a series of steps were taken. The first stage involved the Historic Buildings Committee considering the offer, and if they judged the house to be of historical significance they would recommend its acceptance subject to finance. At the second stage, a full financial report on the property would be prepared, with a local National Trust agent consulting with the owner and establishing any repair and maintenance costs, as well as the general running costs, while the Trust's advisors on paintings and decorative arts would consider the contents of the house, and relevant advisors would also discuss any agricultural questions. The Trust would also negotiate with the owner about opening times and days for public access and consider how much money admission fees were likely to generate. From these discussions, the Trust would create a report to submit to the General Purposes Committee, and if at this stage there was not an estimated deficit resulting from the costs of maintaining the house, the Trust would ask the owner for an endowment to supplement its income. If the owner cannot afford the endowment, the Trust might be able to source it from other charitable bodies, but only sparingly.

[129] Weideger, *Guilding the Acorn,* 65.
[130] Nixon, 'Trouble at the National Trust', 531.
[131] Quoted in Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 88.
[132] Fedden, *The Continuing Purpose*, 120-3.

When advocating for the CHS, Lothian had stated that 'the real problem, as these houses change hands, is to find the right kind of people…to make these houses living centres of beauty and hospitality and discussion' in a 'more democratic…age'.[133] In part, the Trust catered to the wishes of country house owners in the short term with the view that the properties would serve the public more after a period of transition. Lees-Milne wrote in 1945 that few country houses would continue to be used as private family residences for long but that for now, the Trust was finding compromises with families continuing to live in its houses, typically with the family using one dedicated part of the building, with other areas open to public visitors as showrooms.[134] Lees-Milne emphasised that from the Trust's perspective, the priority was to ensure that the fabric of the buildings and their interiors, contents, and 'above all their character' would be preserved, but it encouraged the speculation which was already taking place about how they might be repurposed in the longer term, with possibilities including adult education colleges and other public uses.[135] In its early years, the Country Houses Scheme at least partly reflected the Trust's purposes being defined in terms of public benefit. If country houses were becoming obsolete as ancestral seats, it made sense that they should be repurposed in these ways.

Yet despite the Trust's purpose being defined in terms of stewardship for public benefit, its leadership was disparaging toward the public. In 1949, Lees-Milne recalled a 'young Lord S.' talking about 'the inhabitants of Burnley…as one would of Hottentots', adding that he agreed and that it was a view widely held among the aristocracy.[136] Weideger uses this quote to suggest that the Trust was going back on its original mission: 'whether "they" are called savages, the great unwashed, the needy, the underprivileged or, for the moment, the underclass, the euphemisms refer to the very people whose lot in life the National Trust had been created to try to improve'.[137]

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[133] Kerr, 'England's Country Houses'.
[134] James Lees-Milne, 'The Country House,' in James Lees-Milne (Ed.), *The National Trust: A Record of Fifty Years' Achievement,* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1945), 77.
[135] Lees-Milne, 'The Country House,' 77.
[136] James Lees-Milne quoted in Weideger, *Guilding the Acorn,* 66. ("Hottentot" is an offensive term used historically to refer to Khoekhoe people.)
[137] Weideger, *Guilding the Acorn,* 66.

The contempt for working-class people expressed here was reflected in the increasingly aristocratic associations people had with the Trust.

A tension between access and preservation experienced across historic sites was complicated in National Trust country houses by the presence of former owners. In a National Trust pamphlet published in 1936 inviting owners to join the CHS, opening the houses to public visitors fifty days per year was suggested but many houses opened to the public for far fewer days than this recommendation.[138] The Trust's statutory duty 'to preserve country houses "for the benefit of the nation" had been interpreted in a narrow way'.[139] The Trust described public access as a condition for the families to remain 'in occupation' of the houses, but this access was limited to the rooms dubbed 'more important' by the Trust – presumably the state rooms or equivalent - on 'certain days in the year'.[140] For many landowners, uncertainty surrounding public access to the houses in the interwar period was a good thing, restoring 'the status of the visit as a gracious privilege, rather than the right it had been in danger of becoming', and encouraging 'only the decorous, the well-heeled and the deferential' to visit.[141] Lees-Milne is often quoted as having 'made no secret of the fact that his loyalties were first to the houses, then to the families that had created them and only then to the National Trust'.[142] Mandler adds to that list of priorities: 'the country (as) a distant fourth'.[143] The CHS saw Octavia Hill's ideas become 'less important as guiding principles for the trust' as the Trust's priorities changed, becoming preoccupied with preserving mansions and the interests of elites no longer able to afford the same lifestyle, rather than the improvement of the quality of life of people living in poverty in cities.[144]

[138] Weideger, *Guilding the Acorn,* 87.
[139] Waterson, *The National Trust,* 118.
[140] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1936-1937, 2.
[141] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 252. See Adrian Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting: Five Centuries of Tourism and Taste*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd. In association with the National Trust, 1989) for an overview of the longer history of public visits to country houses.
[142] Waterson, *The National Trust,* 117.
[143] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 302.
[144] Swenson, '"To Every Landless Man, Woman and Child in England",'190.

As the Trust's priorities changed, it came under criticism. In the second half of the 1960s, questions about whose interests the Trust represented seemed to come to a head. In 1963 the Trust extended its mandate to include the preservation of industrial monuments, marking another shift in the charity's focus as it began taking on fewer country houses.[145] In 1965, Project Neptune was launched with a fundraising target of 2 million pounds to purchase and preserve undeveloped coastline, coinciding with the Trust's 70th anniversary. The Trust used historic symbolism for the Project, including its Roman namesake, with Prince Philip publicly launching the campaign and Boy Scouts and Cadets lighting hundreds of bonfires and cressets along beaches at the sites of Armada Beacons on St George's Day in 1965.[146] Project Neptune responded to industrial and residential development in coastal areas and the growing popularity of seaside holidays and tourism. It aimed to preserve unspoilt coast by persuading landowners to either transfer coastland to the Trust or use covenants to enable some protection. Conrad Rawnsley, grandson of National Trust founder Hardwicke Rawnsley, was brought in to lead the campaign. Rawnsley was vocal about the organisation's failure to engage with a broader public than its existing membership. He wrote to Richard Dimbleby, who was making a television programme about the appeal, telling him that Project Neptune was 'for the man in the street' and that it was a shame this had 'not been the public image of the Trust since before the war when the Stately Home Scheme bedevilled it'.[147]

Beyond their competing visions, Rawnsley clashed with the Trust's leadership over his poor communication and elaborate plans for Project Neptune. The conflict culminated in a speech Rawnsley gave at a press conference in 1966, during which he accused the Trust of being bankrupt in ideas, leadership, and a common touch, as well as being 'part of the Establishment', with committees run on the old boy network.[148] He was sacked, the Neptune Appeals and Promotion

[145] Cannadine, 'The First Hundred Years,' 24.
[146] Annual Report for 1964-5, 10-11.
[147] Waterson, *The National Trust,* 167.
[148] Quoted in Waterson, *The National Trust*, 169.

Department was created and the campaign continued at a reduced cost.[149] Rawnsley set up the Members' Reform Committee, campaigning against the Trust on the basis that it was 'undemocratic and inefficient', as well as 'oligarchic and exclusive', treating country house owners 'deferentially' and failing to represent its membership's wishes.[150] At the Trust's 1966 AGM, the Members' Reform Committee sought support from the Trust's membership and in 1967 called an Extraordinary General Meeting, with a series of resolutions detailed by Rawnsley in an eight-page leaflet, 'A Case for the Reform of the Trust'. Rawnsley correctly gauged that the Trust's public image and committee members were 'unduly aristocratic' and this was acknowledged internally: Lord Antrim, Chairman of the Trust, conceded that the charity was 'a self-perpetuating oligarchy…a phrase seized on by Rawnsley'.[151] The Council reported that less than 10% of members at the EGM voted for an independent inquiry 'of the kind proposed', but conceded that the policies its critics advocated for had discouraged some prospective benefactors.[152] In response, Antrim organised an inquiry chaired by Henry Benson to settle the dispute.

In 1968, the Benson Report was published and presented a series of recommendations centred on the formalisation of the Trust's administration to match its growing size, which led to a period of professionalisation.[153] Decentralisation was a key issue addressed by the Benson Committee. The eight regional committees - which were nearly all led by 'a country magnate and/or country gentleman background', including Anthony Head, former High Commissioner in Nigeria – were expanded to fourteen, with finance and acquisitions controlled centrally.[154] The Estates and Historic Buildings Committees were combined into one Properties Committee, answering to the Executive Committee alongside the Finance Committee. The new administrators came from careers in the civil service and business, replacing the 'patrician oligarchs',[155] and the appointment

[149] National Trust Annual Report 1966-67, 10.
[150] Cannadine, 'The First Hundred Years,' 25.
[151] Waterson, *The National Trust*, 171.
[152] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1966-67, (London: National Trust, 1967), 5.
[153] Nixon, 'Trouble at the National Trust', 547.
[154] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 246-7.
[155] Cannadine, 'The First Hundred Years,' 25.

of Sir John Winnifrith, a senior civil servant, as the Trust's first Director-General in 1968 'was a sign that the Trust was indeed entering a new epoch'.[156] However, this did not mean a radical democratisation of the organisation; the new appointments were still 'undeniably' shaped by the "old boys net" criticised by Rawnsley.[157] Benson was a shooting tenant at the Drovers Estate, which had passed to the Trust in 1942, and three members of the Committee were also on the Trust's Council. In the wake of the Benson Report, the Trust was able to modernise 'without appearing to change radically'.[158]

In 1968 the Benson Report was published following an enquiry commissioned by Lord Antrim, Chairman of the Trust, in response to criticism of the Trust's leadership and image as an organisation no longer interested in true public access and run like an old boys' club. The Trust had argued that the preferences of former owners had to be considered, as well as the maintenance of the properties themselves:

> 'When a property is first offered to the Trust as a gift, a bargain has to be made with the donors. This can only be reached by compromise, and without it the property would not come to the Trust and in a number of cases might, as a result, not be preserved'.[159]

While recognising the difficulty of managing preservation and access equally, the Benson Report called for 'a decisive move' towards extended opening hours and a longer visiting season.[160] It also requested the Executive Committee to stop regarding its meetings 'purely as a formality'.[161]

Conclusion

From its founding, the National Trust played a role in the presentation of the British past as the heritage not only of people living in Britain but across the world. In doing so, it promoted an

[156] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 250.
[157] Waterson, *The National Trust*, 176.
[158] Nixon, 'Trouble at the National Trust,' 535-6.
[159] National Trust Annual Report 1966-67, 7-8.
[160] Nixon, 'Trouble at the National Trust', 548.
[161] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 243.

imperial patriotism, seen explicitly in the example of Quebec House. The Trust was inspired by American preservationists, having based its constitution on the Trustees of Reservations in Massachusetts. In the 1890s and early twentieth century, historic preservation was understood in terms of national and imperial identity. White settlers around the world were supposed to be able to identify with the historic buildings and landscapes owned by the Trust. This shaped the Trust's choice of properties and it often acquired properties with links to historic figures associated with North America. In this context, ancestry was understood in racial and cultural terms. From the Trust's early preservation of historic houses connected to well-known individuals to the creation of the Country Houses Scheme, this thread of ancestry runs through.

Though Quebec House came to the National Trust twenty years before the Country Houses Scheme developed, the dynamics at play here are similar, with a historic house being opened to the public for visits, and its appeal being rooted in both the architecture of the house and the historic significance of its former residents, with a living descendant still connected to the house writing its history. John Gaze suggests that the National Trust acquired houses associated with famous individuals at a rate of about once per year from the beginning of the Country Houses Scheme in 1936 until 1950.[162] In 1945, the Trust considered acquiring Fairlight Place based on its connection to Cecil Rhodes. It decided against this acquisition because the link between Rhodes and the house, which belonged to his relatives, was 'fairly tenuous'.[163] Gaze notes that there is no agreed-upon criteria for the Trust surrounding whether or not to accept properties with famous associations alone.[164] In more recent years, the most prominent example has been the acquisition of a pair of houses, 20 Forthlin Road and Mendips, the childhood homes of Paul McCartney and John Lennon in Liverpool in 1995 and 2003. Chapters Four and Five continue to consider these themes, exploring the Trust's collaborations with American preservation organisations in more

[162] Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape,* 158.
[163] Correspondence from Lord Elton(?) to Mr Smith, 19 September 1945, Unique ID 6221268, 'Potential Acquisition: Fairlight Place.' (1945-6), National Trust Archive.
[164] Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape,* 164.

detail, and how the Country Houses Scheme further institutionalised a respectful deference towards aristocratic family histories.

In the next chapter, I consider how historic preservation was being developed in India in parallel to the National Trust by exploring Lord Curzon's programme of restoration and reform. This offers an example of how heritage was treated differently across the colonies and the metropole. In India, Mughal history was respected and admired, seen as a natural precursor to British rule. As a strong supporter of the National Trust who saw preservation as an integral part of colonial governance, Curzon 'epitomized' the 'imperial conservation drive' by using the past to explain the present world order and to subsume the histories of Britain's colonies into England's history.[165]

[165] Paul Betts and Corey Ross, 'Modern Historical Preservation – Towards a Global Perspective,' in Paul Betts and Corey Ross (Eds.), *Heritage in the Modern World*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 14.

Chapter 3 Curzon I: Preserving the Present and the Past in India and England

As the National Trust was establishing itself and beginning to preserve historic houses connected with famous historic individuals at the turn of the twentieth century, Lord Curzon was shaping historic preservation legislation and practice in India and Britain. Significantly, Curzon predicted that he would be better remembered for preserving monuments than his administrative achievements, and friends and colleagues agreed he identified with the monuments preserved under his leadership, almost as if they were his own.[1] Jawarharlal Nehru famously claimed that 'after every other Viceroy has been forgotten Curzon will be remembered because he restored all that is beautiful in India'.[2] Curzon repeatedly connected himself to his former rulers in India, such as Akbar I, the third Mughal emperor (1542-1605) and Lord Wellesley, 1st Marquess Wellesley (1760-1842), Governor-General of Bengal from 1798 to 1805. During his first tour as Viceroy of India in 1899, Lord Curzon was photographed with his party at the tomb of Akbar I, one of many historic sites to be restored during Curzon's Viceroyalty.[3] The photograph is reproduced in the album recording the tour and is captioned 'Past and Present Rulers of India at Secundra' (see Image 12 in the Appendix).[4] A friend of Curzon's, Valentine Chirol, once joked that if he were Hindu, he would 'almost believe that in a former stage of existence [Curzon] must have been Akbar himself', to which Curzon responded, 'I can always feel myself to be living the very life of all the great men of whom I read in history.'[5] In 1903, Curzon held a reception at Government House, in Calcutta, where guests wore period costume and Curzon dressed as his predecessor, Lord

[1] Eugenia Herbert, 'Curzon Nostalgia: Landscaping Historical Monuments in India,' *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes,* Vol 32 (2012), 277-296, 287.
[2] Quoted in Betts and Ross, 'Modern Historical Preservation,' 23.
[3] For a survey of some of the restoration projects overseen by Curzon in India see Derek Linstrum, 'The Sacred Past: Lord Curzon and the Indian Monument,' *South Asia Studies*, 11 (1995), 1-17.
[4] '131, Past and Present Rulers of India at Secundra,' in 'H.E. Lord Curzon's First Tour in India, 1899' Deen Dayal & Sons, (photo album), 430/17, Curzon Collection, British Library, London.
[5] Quoted in Eugenia Herbert, *Flora's Empire: British Gardens in India*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 216.

Wellesley.[6] Curzon hosted thereception to mark the anniversary of a ball Wellesley had held at Government House to mark the Treaty of Amiens, which was signed in 1802 at the end of the War of the Second Coalition and the close of the French Revolutionary Wars, temporarily ending hostilities between Britain and France. In 1799 Wellesley's forces invaded Mysore, which saw Tipu, the Sultan, defeated and killed. Lord Wellesley's younger brother was Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, who fought in the Anglo-Mysore War and went on to play a leading role in the defeat of the French in the Napoleonic Wars. Tipu had been allied with the French, perhaps explaining the significance of the Treaty of Amiens in Calcutta.

In Chapter Six, Curzon's legacy is explored more explicitly; in this Chapter, I focus on his relationship to preservation in India and Britain during his lifetime. Curzon had a strong sense that history was both important and political. He undertook historical projects outside of his official roles, but also in an official capacity, believing that historic preservation was a practical requirement of government, as well as a tool of political influence. In the first section of this chapter, I consider Curzon's support for the National Trust and his impact on preservation legislation in Britain, before detailing more broadly Curzon's approach to historic preservation in India and England. In the third section of this Chapter, I use the Taj Mahal and Victoria Memorial as examples of Curzon's style of preservation. In the final section, I consider the Victoria Memorial in more detail as an illustration of Curzon's wish to make a particular vision of history visible, and the limited success this has had in India.

Curzon and the National Trust

Curzon's extensive conservation scheme saw him personally involved in repairing and restoring many sites during his tenure and the British Government in India gained a more systematic approach to the management of historic buildings and monuments.[7] The Archaeological Survey

[6] David Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain*, (London: Penguin Books, 1995), 82.
[7] Sengupta, 'Monument Preservation,' 172.

of India was brought under the direct control of the central government and the post of Director General was restored and given to John Marshall. Curzon compiled lists of repairs for local governments' superintendents and the Archaeological Survey, supervising their work from Calcutta and completed six tours to see Mughal monuments and monitor their preservation, overseeing the work at Akbar's Tomb in Agra, Humayun's Tomb and the Red Fort in Delhi, Fatehpur Sikri, and, most famously, the Taj Mahal.[8] In 1901, Curzon had an older memorial to mark the Black Hole of Calcutta replicated on the corner of Dalhousie Square, which was later removed to the graveyard of St John's Church, Calcutta, by Indian nationalists in the 1940s.[9] Curzon also had extensive involvement in preservation in Britain. He was installed as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, a position also held by two former Viceroys, Lord Dalhousie and Lord Dufferin, in July 1904. This was originally an influential political role dating back to the twelfth century, as the Warden was responsible for the coastal towns which make up the Cinque Ports (Hastings, New Romney, Hythe Dover, and Sandwich). By the time Curzon was appointed, it was a largely ceremonial title awarded by the Sovereign. Walmer Castle is the official residence of the Lord Warden, and Curzon wrote a history of the castle and previous Lords Warden.[10] However, he resigned after four months in the role, blaming the castle for his wife, Mary's, declining health.[11] Curzon also purchased and restored Bodiam Castle in Sussex and Tattershall Castle in Lincolnshire and gifted both to the National Trust in his will. Alongside the Trust, he was a fellow of the British Academy, a trustee at the British Museum and the National Gallery, a member of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), involved in the National Portrait Gallery, the Royal Geographical Society, and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. Curzon was active in commemorative projects, advocating for the celebration of Empire Day and overseeing the creation of the Cenotaph and the traditions associated with Remembrance Day

[8] Santhi Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters: The Power, Subjectivity, and Space of India's Mughal Architecture,* (London: Duke University Press, 2011), 70.
[9] Curzon, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses, Volume I* (London: Cassel and Company, LTD, 1925), 150.
[10] George Curzon, *The Personal History of Walmer Castle and Its Lords Warden,* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1927).
[11] Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy,* 91.

following the First World War. The Victoria Memorial was the largest scale monument Curzon oversaw, completed in 1921 as a tribute to the late Queen.

When Curzon inherited Kedleston Hall in 1916, he carried out restoration work on the house, alongside his projects on the other historic homes he owned. At Kedleston, he made plans for a museum to display his collection of objects from Asia.[12] Half of his collection was given to the V&A and the museum at Kedleston was created according to his plans posthumously in collaboration between the Curzon family and the V&A in 1925.[13] The Museum at Kedleston has a collection of over 1,000 objects from across Asia and most of the objects are from India, including diplomatic gifts as well as souvenirs and examples of fine art and craftsmanship. The museum was originally called the Indian Museum before its name was changed to Eastern Museum, and currently it is being referred to simply as the Museum at Kedleston. This reflects the moment the Trust is in right now, in which it is trying to work out how to suitably describe its collections. Some of the items from Curzon's original loan remain in the V&A's collections, and detailed research into the Museum at Kedleston is currently being conducted for the first time by Charlotte Johnson.[14]

Curzon's approach was shaped by the leading thinkers on historic preservation in the late nineteenth century, such as John Ruskin and William Morris. For Derek Linstrum, in Curzon's speeches there are 'many echoes…of Morris' missionary zeal and Ruskin's colourful prose'.[15] Ruskin proposed that a 'reading of architecture can encompass a reading of history'.[16] Curzon similarly described buildings as 'documents just as valuable in reading the records of the past as in any manuscript or parchment deed'.[17] Curzon became a member of the Society for the

[12] A photograph of the museum is provided in the Appendix to this thesis: see Image 13.
[13] Sally-Anne Huxtable, Corinne Fowler, Christo Kefalas, and Emma Slocombe (eds.), *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery*, National Trust, (2020), 85.
[14] See Charlotte Johnson, 'Imperial Connections: Re-examining Kedleston Hall,' (PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, forthcoming).
[15] Linstrum, 'The Last of the Augustans,' 28.
[16] Baucom, *Out of Place*, 73.
[17] HL Debate 30 April 1912, Vol 11, Column 872, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1912-04-30/debates/0d1764e5-adc1-4446-85b2-e6df3d75e6a9/LordsChamber, Accessed 13 February 2023.

Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1906 and remained one until his death, and the Society was 'closely associated with his restoration of Tattershall Castle'.[18] The SPAB, like the National Trust, took an interest in international developments in historic preservation[19], and had a foreign committee which 'exported' its ideas and concerns to Egypt and India.[20] The Society had a continued influence Indian preservation, contributing to a manual for the conservation of historic monuments published by Sir John Marshall, Director of General Archaeology, in 1923.[21] Christiana Herringham, a member of the SPAB, visited India in 1907 to paint and study Buddhist artworks and recalled continuously hearing about Curzon's role in preservation and repair work on historic monuments.[22] Curzon corresponded with the SPAB and he received advice about avoiding restoration, which the SPAB disapproved of and believed Indian monuments were particularly susceptible to.[23] Kavuri-Bauer suggests the popularity of Ruskin's thought on historic preservation would 'have certainly influenced Curzon's own approach to India's monuments'.[24] Curzon even proposed privately that a Central Asian equivalent to the SPAB should be set up in Russia.[25]

In the early-twentieth century, the buying power of newly wealthy American collectors contributed to British anxiety about artworks and artefacts being bought up and removed across the Atlantic. At different moments, the National Trust sought to protect historical sites in Britain from US interference while simultaneously promoting and contributing to the preservation of those with connections to North America's ancestral heritage in Britain. In 1929, Lawrence Jones of *The Athenaeum* wrote a letter to *The Times* praising the National Trust's work, suggesting that

[18] Linstrum, 'The Last of the Augustans,' 36.
[19] The 1888 Annual Report of the SPAB included details of government plans for preservation in India and Malta, for example. See Astrid Swenson, 'Crusader Heritages and Imperial Preservation,' *Past and Present,* 226:10 (2015), 27-56, 33.
[20] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 63.
[21] Jyoti P. Sharma, 'The British Treatment of Historic Gardens in the Indian Subcontinent: The Transformation of Delhi's Nawab Safdarjung's Tomb Complex from a Funerary Garden into a Public Park,' *Garden History,* Vol 35, No. 2 (2007), 210-228, 215.
[22] Linstrum, 'The Last of the Augustans,' 31.
[23] Linstrum, 'The Sacred Past,' 6-7.
[24] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 61.
[25] Linstrum, 'The Last of the Augustans,' 28.

many of the artworks in National Trust properties would have ended up in the US without the charity's protection.[26] In 1911, Curzon purchased Tattershall Castle, in Lincolnshire, following an appeal from Reverend Yglesias after the Fortesque family sold the Castle to an American consortium and its fireplaces to an American collector. Ralph Cromwell, 3rd Baron Cromwell, inherited Tattershall in 1419 and renovated the existing structure, building the Great Tower which remains today in brick. *The Times* reported on some historic connections between Tattershall and North America, with the castle having been one of the county seats of Theophilus Clinton, 4th Earl of Lincoln, in the seventeenth century and a centre for supporters of the Puritan movement to meet, who would go on to be involved in the creation of settlements in Massachusetts.[27] When the castle was purchased by Americans in 1911, it was to be dismantled and its fireplaces were removed and prepared for transport. The National Trust tried to save the castle but could not raise enough funds.[28] Canon Rawnsley sent a telegram to be printed in the press describing the sale as 'unpatriotic callousness' and the public partly responsible because of its apathy, suggesting that if enough strong public opinion was expressed there might still be time to change.[29] The plans for

[26] 'Property Bequeathed to the Nation,' *The Times*, 29 January 1929, The Times Digital Archive, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/archive/article/1929-01-29/10/8.html#start%3D1785-01-01%26end%3D1985-12-31%26terms%3D%27National%20Trust%27%20Atlantic%26back%3D/tto/archive/find/%252527National+Trust%252527+Atlantic/w:1785-01-01%7E1985-12-31/4%26prev%3D/tto/archive/frame/goto/%252527National+Trust%252527+Atlantic/w:1785-01-01%7E1985-12-31/32%26next%3D/tto/archive/frame/goto/%252527National+Trust%252527+Atlantic/w:1785-01-01%7E1985-12-31/34, accessed 1 February 2022.

[27] 'Tattershall Castle,' The times, 26 September 1911, 7, Gale Document number CS118816058, accessed via: https://go-gale-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&retrievalId=9c33bbe0-45ac-437b-af08-77f70179b91d&hitCount=29&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=11&docId=GALE%7CCS118816058&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZTMA-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CCS118816058&searchId=R2&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true, accessed 30 October 2023.

[28] Sebastian Fry, 'A History of the National Heritage Collection Volume Four: 1913-1931, The Ancient Monuments Branch Under Peers and Baines,' English Heritage (2014), 2.

[29] 'Tattershall Castle: Canon Rawnsley and Public Apathy,' *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser,* 23 September 1911, 11, Gale Newspaper Archive, Document number GR3217302397, accessed via, https://go-gale-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&retrievalId=3e0afdfe-b70b-40a3-ba01-8d729ff6fb09&hitCount=839&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=1&docId=GALE%7CGR3217302397&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZBLE-

the removal of the castle involved taking it apart and numbering each of the half million bricks, each of them valued between a shilling and eighteen pence, and reassembling the castle in the United States.[30] The fireplaces were said to have been sawn into pieces and packed in crates ready for transport from Tilbury Docks and were described in *The Times* as resembling 'chunks of sandstone hewn from a quarry', leaving behind gaping holes in the walls of Tattershall.[31] Curzon successfully outbid the American buyers before the deal closed, paying £12,000 for the Castle.[32]

The return of the fireplaces to Tattershall on Wednesday 5 June 1912 was ceremonious. The fireplaces were transported back to the Castle from London by rail, and Curzon arrived in the village the night before the festivities. Standing by the village cross, accompanied by members of the parish council, Curzon spoke about the continuity of English history and the desire to remain familiar with historic manners and customs.[33] Following Curzon's speech, a band played music and a procession brought the fireplaces to the castle on horse-drawn lorries draped with Union Jack flags (see Image 6 in the appendix). Curzon and Reverend Yglesias rode behind the fireplaces

MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CGR3217302397&searchId=R1&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true, 30 October 2023.

[30] 'Tattershall Castle,' Daily Mirror, 22 September 1911, 4, Gale Document Number UNHADL414467523, accessed via: https://go-gale-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&retrievalId=7ef54271-659c-41f8-9ef8-2a9b63d965ad&hitCount=839&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=8&docId=GALE%7CUNHADL414467523&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZDMA&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CUNHADL414467523&searchId=R1&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true, 30 October 2023.

[31] 'Tattershall Castle,' The times, 26 September 1911, 7, Gale Document number CS118816058, accessed via: https://go-gale-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&retrievalId=9c33bbe0-45ac-437b-af08-77f70179b91d&hitCount=29&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=11&docId=GALE%7CCS118816058&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZTMA-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CCS118816058&searchId=R2&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true, 30 October 2023.

[32] Fry, 'A History of the National Heritage Collection, Volume Four, 2.

[33] 'The Tattershall Fireplaces,' *The Times*, 6 June 1912, Gale Document number CS235339462, accessed via: https://go-gale-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&retrievalId=5f7e0e73-098a-4fab-bf44-ada05d71631e&hitCount=29&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=20&docId=GALE%7CCS235339462&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZTMA-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CCS235339462&searchId=R2&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true, 30 October 2023.

in a landau pulled by some of the men employed to restore the castle. The procession lasted for an hour and a half, riding through village streets which had been decorated with flower arches and bunting. When they reached the castle, Curzon spoke again, noting that the locals had grown up in the shadow of the castle and suggested that it had 'exercised, perhaps, an unconscious influence upon their life' and was 'part of their own heritage'.[34] Curzon also outlined plans to excavate the Castle and its surroundings to ascertain what the rest of the building and the older iterations of it had been like. He proposed to restore the moats which had once surrounded the Castle and learn as much as possible about how the building had been lived in, but without restoring its contents. Instead, the floor in the centre of the castle was to be levelled and four floors added so the visitor could walk around and see the castle from all levels. By preserving the castle and opening it to the public, Tattershall would become 'a memorial of the sort of conditions under which great noblemen once lived'.[35] William Weis, the architect, was brought in to superintend the restoration work. Following the procession and speeches, Curzon entertained the attendees at tea before leaving that evening. Curzon had the fireplaces reinstated and the buildings at Tattershall restored, and in June 1914 the Castle was opened to the visiting public.

From its founding, the Trust's relationships with Americans were largely collaborative and friendly. In contrast with other examples seen in this thesis, here American interest in English heritage was seen as a threat. Funnily enough, in this period it was often American money which

[34] 'The Tattershall Fireplaces,' *The Times*, 6 June 1912, Gale Document number CS235339462, accessed via: https://go-gale-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&retrievalId=5f7e0e73-098a-4fab-bf44-ada05d71631e&hitCount=29&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=20&docId=GALE%7CCS235339462&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZTMA-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CCS235339462&searchId=R2&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true, 30 October 2023.

[35] 'The Tattershall Fireplaces,' *The Times*, 6 June 1912, Gale Document number CS235339462, accessed via: https://go-gale-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&retrievalId=5f7e0e73-098a-4fab-bf44-ada05d71631e&hitCount=29&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=20&docId=GALE%7CCS235339462&docType=Article&sort=Relevance&contentSegment=ZTMA-MOD1&prodId=GDCS&pageNum=1&contentSet=GALE%7CCS235339462&searchId=R2&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true, 30 October 2023.

funded the 'exclusive club' of individuals restoring castles, such as Curzon, whose wives Mary Leiter (1870-1906) and Grace Duggan (1879-1958), were both American.[36] Curzon received money from his father-in-law, Levi Leiter's, will, providing an annual income for him and his daughters of £41,000 by 1914, of which he was allowed to spend £31,000.[37] He used this money to fund his restoration projects. Rawnsley had hoped for a collective fundraiser to save the castle, but, as throughout its history, the Trust was dependent on wealthy individuals as much as public support. In 1925 Tattershall Castle was passed onto the National Trust alongside Bodiam Castle, having been left to the Charity in Curzon's will. John Bailey, the Trust's Chairman, noted that Curzon 'had almost from the foundation of the Trust taken a very great interest in its work, and was from time to time in correspondence with those responsible for its direction'.[38] Bailey adds that at one point Curzon had considered becoming Chairman of the Trust's Executive Committee but was unable to because of his existing commitments. Curzon was a nominated member of the National Trust Council as a Trustee of the National Gallery from 1911 and was regularly listed as a donor to the Trust in its annual reports. He also performed the opening ceremony for the 'formal dedication of Colley Hill as an open space' on behalf of the Trust in 1912.[39] Curzon spoke about London being 'like a great octopus stretching out its tentacles in order to lay hold of the rich pastures and leafy lanes of the countryside' and that the motivation to preserve open spaces like Colley Hill was to preserve 'the soul of the nation', found in the countryside and not the 'dark and crowded cities', in-keeping with the National Trust's rhetoric.[40]

Multiple National Trust representatives emphasised that, beyond the immediate value of gaining such historically significant castles, Curzon's careful planning had ensured that the rents on the properties and ticket payments from visitors would generate enough income for the Trust not

[36] Aslet, *The Story of the Country House,* 196.
[37] Gilmour, *Curzon*, 414.
[38] 'Curzon Bequests,' *The Times,* 24 July 1925, 11, The Times Digital Archive, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS186587384/GDCS?u=bham_uk&sid=GDCS&xid=09ff0474, accessed 16 September 2020.
[39] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, Report of the National Trust Council 1912-1913, (London: National Trust, 1913), 9.
[40] Quoted in Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape*, 52.

only to maintain Tattershall and Bodiam but also to create a capital fund. John Bailey, the Trust's Chairman, praised Curzon for actively intervening to preserve historic monuments during his lifetime and continuing to in his afterlife 'by the operation of his will'.[41] Nigel Bond, vice-chairman of the Trust, stated that:

> 'Lord Curzon has wisely not tied up the properties so that they cannot be fitted into whatever future conditions may arise, and he has put the thing on a sound financial basis so that the properties will not be a source of expense, but, we hope, will gradually become a source of revenue. This is the finest individual gift or bequest the Trust has ever had. Tattershall is one of the most important buildings architecturally in the country. It is of a very rare type, one of the earliest known examples of the brick fortified castle…I am sure the Trust will particularly welcome the suggestion that a member of Lord Curzon's family shall be on the committee of management and so continue the association.'[42]

This could almost be seen as a precursor to the Country Houses Scheme set up ten years later, when endowments would become a common part of a bequest. The fund does appear to have been created in the 1930s; listed under 'Special Funds and Investments', the 'Curzon Memorial Fund' appears in the Trust's 1937-1938 Annual Report at two hundred pounds.[43] The fund is listed throughout the 1940s in the Trust's Annual Reports. Kedleston, the Curzon family seat, would come to the Trust later through his descendants.

Curzon's Approach to the Past

[41] 'Curzon Bequests,' *The Times,* 24 July 1925, 11, The Times Digital Archive, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS186587384/GDCS?u=bham_uk&sid=GDCS&xid=09ff0474, accessed 16 September 2020.
[42] 'Curzon Bequests,' *The Times,* 24 July 1925, 11.
[43] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1937-1938, 62.

Following the events surrounding Tattershall Castle, the National Trust's Council congratulated Curzon and proposed that future legislation should make 'such vandalism impossible', arguing that the charity should go beyond its preservation role and prevent historic monuments being 'treated as material for commercial exploitation'.[44] The Council held a Conference with other interested groups and drafted a new Ancient Monuments Protection Bill under Robert Hunter designed to create an advisory board for the commissioners of works and confer the latter with suspensory powers to protect historic monuments.[45] In 1913 the Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act was passed, integrating the measures introduced by the Ancient Monuments Protection Acts of 1882, 1900, and 1910. Curzon spoke at length in the House of Lords during the Bill's Second Reading about the motivations behind the Bill and its parameters before it went to a Select Committee for consideration.

Curzon presented the issue of protecting historic monuments in the context of Britain's colonies, with particular attention to India and the legislation he had helped introduce there. The 1904 Act for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments Curzon's government that had passed in India differed from legislation used in Britain as it gave the government more far-reaching powers, bringing preservation within the parameters of the "civilising mission" and 'anticipating its contribution to nation building'.[46] The Act provided the foundation for historic preservation policy in India, still informing it today.[47] The Indian Ancient Monuments Act was modelled on the British Ancient Monument Protection Act of 1882, and was the first law passed applying to historic preservation across all of India.[48] This Act also directly informed the 1913 Ancient Monuments Act in Britain through Curzon's influence.

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[44] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty, Report for the Year 1911-12, (London: National Trust, 1912), 11-12.
[45] Cowell, 'For the Benefit of the Nation,' 312.
[46] Mary E. Hancock, *Politics of Heritage from Madras to Chenai,* (Indiana University Press, 2008), 38-9.
[47] Mrinalini Rajagopalan, *Building Histories: The Archival and Affective Lives of Five Monuments in Modern Delhi,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 7.
[48] Indra Sengupta, 'Monument Preservation and the Vexing Question of Religious Structures in Colonial India,' in Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler (eds), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire*, c. 1800-1940, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 172.

What happens when we read the restoration of the Tattershall fireplaces in the wider context of Curzon's preservation work in India? When the fireplaces were returned to Tattershall draped in Union Jacks, it was not only a patriotic celebration of historic relics returned home, but a broader imperial patriotism, reflected in Curzon's argument in the House of Lords. He described Britain as part of the 'civilised world' which sees national monuments 'as part of the heritage and history of the nation'.[49] He argued that England occupied a unique position because,

> 'These ancient monuments are dear, not only to ourselves, but to our offspring who have gone out from this country to our Dominions beyond the seas. They are a part also of their heritage and of their history and tradition, and the reason for this feeling is quite clear. In the countries to which they have gone there are no such ancient monuments. In the nature of things they cannot exist there owing to the newness of the country. The result is that year by year we see our kith and kin from America or from the Colonies come back to this country and visit, with an interest and a devotion greater even than our own, the ancient monuments which exist in this land. Therefore, we have a duty in keeping them up which is not only a national duty but may be described as an imperial duty.'[50]

Curzon's "terra nullius" claim that there were no ancient monuments in the colonies denied indigenous histories and crucially reaffirmed imperial identity by encouraging settlers to look to England for their histories, echoing the words of the Trust's Council in Chapter Two. The Castle belonged in Britain, and it was there that citizens of Britain's settler colonies could see their shared heritage. The idea of members of Britain's imperial "family" visiting historic sites in Britain is picked up in Chapter Four, which details examples of the Trust preserving places linked to famous Americans' ancestors and celebrating Transatlantic history as a lineage between Britain and the US. As Curzon was suggesting Britain had a special responsibility to protect its heritage

[49] HL Debate 30 April 1912, Vol 11, Column 871, [online], Accessed 13 February 2023, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/1912-04-30/debates/0d1764e5-adc1-4446-85b2-e6df3d75e6a9/LordsChamber.
[50] HL Debate 30 April 1912, Vol 11, Column 872.

for its descendant populations to appreciate, he continued to present American and other foreign buyers as the common threat to English monuments, along with neglectful owners.[51] Lord Eversley, a former First Commissioner of Works, agreed that American millionaires presented a 'new danger' to Britain's historic landmarks and artworks.[52] Repeating a common argument among preservationists, Curzon suggested that England's history had uniquely protected its historic monuments because invasion and civil war had done less damage to them than in other countries.

Simultaneously, the potential for the legislation to infringe on private owners' rights was a key concern, highlighting a central difference in the British government's approach to preservation in Britain and the colonies. In 1900, Curzon argued that the government had to intervene further in historic preservation in India than it would in Britain because the same wealth could not be relied on as in Europe for private owners to fund conservation.[53] Curzon maintained that individual owners were trustees on behalf of the nation, meaning their role should be combined with government intervention rather than being replaced by it.[54] However, under Curzon's Viceroyalty, 'the colonial state in India was willing to adopt a much more interventionist approach', which was welcomed by the SPAB and the Royal Institute of British Architects back in Britain.[55]

Previous attempts at more extensive preservation legislation in England had been met with opposition over the private ownership issue, but Curzon's 1904 Act gave the state powers of compulsory purchase of protected monuments and criminalised damage to protected

[51] HL Debate 30 April 1912, Vol 11, Column 873.
[52] HL Debate 30 April 1912, Vol 11, Column 884.
[53] George Curzon, 'Archaeology and Ancient Monuments,' Speech given at the Asiatic Society 1900, in Sir Thomas Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from His Speeches as Viceroy & Governor General of India 1898-1905*, (London: MacMill & Co. Ltd., 1906), 200.
[54] George Curzon, 'Ancient Monuments Bill,' in Sir Thomas Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from His Speeches as Viceroy & Governor General of India 1898-1905*, (London: MacMill & Co. Ltd., 1906), 214.
[55] Indra Sengupta, 'Monument Preservation and the Vexing Question of Religious Structures in Colonial India,' in Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler (eds), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire*, c. 1800-1940, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 173.

monuments, providing 'the model' for the 1913 Act.[56] Durba Ghosh argues that the lack of emphasis placed on individual property rights in India meant the 1904 Ancient Monuments Preservation Act ultimately 'acted as a form of dispossession for Indians'.[57] Paul Basu and Vinita Damodaran have directly contrasted the National Trust's work in Britain with the erasure of indigenous history in India in this period:

> 'As the vernacular heritage of England's rural past was being valorized by organizations such as the National Trust…India's tribal populations were themselves regarded as a living relic of the prehistoric past: a primitive people without history, and therefore without heritage.'[58]

Curzon prioritised Mughal histories, believing they belonged to 'a civilization for which the British Empire was considered a worthy successor' which he suggested had been brought to India by its previous conquerors rather than representing 'an indigenous genius'.[59] Rajagopalan also contrasts the British government's approach to heritage in India with the establishment of the National Trust in England, arguing that the 'intense regulation of the meanings of the Indian monument' could explain why the Archaeological Survey of India was established over thirty years before the Trust.[60] English heritage was imagined as a unifying marker of a global identity while Indian history was being rewritten as the antecedent to British rule. In India, preservation was institutionalised more comprehensively and sooner than in Britain, and while the concept of national heritage was used to encourage a sense of shared identity among Britons – and the Empire's settler populations and citizens of the US – in India the intention was for monuments to be seen by Indians as 'inert objects from a distant past' and not as the basis for a national

[56] Paul Basu and Vinita Damodaran, 'Colonial Histories of Heritage: Legislative Migrations and the Politics of Preservation,' *Past & Present,* 226:10 (2015), 240-271, 242.
[57] Durba Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History through Statues, Monuments, and Memorials in Curzon's India,' *The Historical Journal,* 66 (2023), 348-369, 357.
[58] Basu and Damodaran, 'Colonial Histories of Heritage,' 242-3.
[59] Basu and Damodaran, 'Colonial Histories of Heritage,' 242-3.
[60] Rajagopalan, *Building Histories,* 15-6.

identity.[61] Historic monuments were remade as relics rather than living spaces[62] or 'mute historic objects'.[63]

In contrast, the 1913 Ancient Monuments Bill 'represented the first significant reduction of an owner's private property rights over protected ancient monuments on his or her land' in Britain.[64] The Marquess of Crewe agreed with Curzon that Britain's 'national habits and traditions' made it difficult to balance the claims of private owners and the public regarding ancient monuments protection.[65] Curzon emphasised that the Bill was intended only to interfere when an owner neglected, injured, or destroyed an ancient monument, and would only moderately impose on private owners' privileges, particularly in the case of dwelling houses.[66] Curzon stressed the responsibility of owners of ancient monuments, reflecting a wider ideal of the benevolent landowner and echoing later arguments made in favour of the National Trust's Country Houses Scheme, suggesting that most private owners recognised that they own 'in a sense, - a broad sense, I admit – a national possession, for which they are trustees to the nation at large'.[67]

In the context of colonial government in India, a more interventionist approach was taken, in part because of British paternalism. Indians were seen as incapable of looking after their own heritage in the same way that, for Curzon, they were not ready for self-rule. This contrast is made clear by his reluctance to interfere with the private property rights of his fellow landowners in Britain, who were trusted to recognise their role in the preservation of historic monuments. In the case of settler colonies, the suggestion that the indigenous populations had no history was part of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny in the US, and similar notions of entitlement to land in Australia, Canada, South Africa, and New Zealand. In these states, the white populations were importing

[61] Rajagopalan, *Building Histories,* 15.
[62] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 67.
[63] Rajagopalan, *Building Histories*, 15-6.
[64] Fry, 'A History of the National Heritage Collection, Volume Four,' 4.
[65] HL Debate 30 April 1912, Vol 11, Column 889. The Marquess of Crewe was Lord Privy Seal and Secretary of State for India, a role which saw him end the Partition of Bengal and help organise the 1911 Delhi Durbar, and was succeeded as Leader of the House of Lords by Curzon.
[66] HL Debate 30 April 1912, Vol 11, Column 876.
[67] HL Debate 30 April 1912, Vol 11, Column 872.

English history and culture. As they created their own monuments, they could look back to England to see the "shared heritage" of the white citizens of the Empire.

Curzon's preservation efforts in India and England are well-documented, and it is essential to read them together to understand how they informed one another, as he was a 'a crucial bridge between cultural heritage debates in the colonies and the metropole'.[68] Curzon's travel writings from the 1880s and 1890s demonstrate that he understood colonial expansion and rule as being connected to historic preservation, exemplified by his experiences travelling in China.[69] Curzon's passion for Indian monuments should be understood in the context of his vision of India as 'one of the foundation stones of the British Empire'.[70] Ultimately, Curzon framed the history of India as 'a chapter in English history'.[71] In a debate about the absorption of the Victoria and Albert Museum's (V&A) Indian collections into its general collections, Curzon, among others who opposed the change, argued that the Indian collection's objects were 'as intrinsic to British national imagining' as those from Ireland.[72] Curzon gave a speech to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1900, in which he emphasised that previous invaders were iconoclasts in contrast to the current British administration, suggesting it had a greater sense of duty. This was a duty 'to dig and discover, to classify, reproduce and describe, to copy and decipher and to cherish and conserve'.[73]

In the earlier stages of colonial expansion in India, Curzon acknowledged there had been little respect for historic monuments among the military and government. Curzon was simultaneously committed to an imperial narrative of the Indian past and to what he saw as sensitive historic preservation. Curzon introduced administrative measures designed to stem 'the illicit export of cultural objects'; which he considered to be 'crucial to reversing "a century of British vandalism

[68] Basu and Damodaran, 'Colonial Histories of Heritage,' 270.
[69] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 65.
[70] Curzon, quoted in Ana Filipa Vrdoljak, *International Law, Museums and the Return of Cultural Objects,* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 96.
[71] Curzon, 'Archaeology and Ancient Monuments,' 202.
[72] Vrdoljak, *International Law, Museums and the Return of Cultural Objects,* 96.
[73] Curzon, 'Archaeology and Ancient Monuments,' 203.

and crime"' undertaken under the East India Company.[74] Curzon ordered the return and reinstallation of the mosaic representing Orpheus from the V&A inside the Diwan-i-Amm.[75] He believed the Parthenon Marbles should not have been removed from Greece to Britain and should have been preserved in situ.[76] He was frustrated by insensitive restorations as well as the neglect of monuments.[77] The British approach to preservation in India focused on the differentiation between the state as a guardian of the past and prior rulers as neglectful, and the principles of preservation used in India were repurposed in other colonial contexts too.[78] Kenya's 1927 Ancient Monuments Preservation Ordinance 'was copied almost verbatim from India's Ancient Monuments Preservation Act of 1904', and Thomas Hart has argued that it was passed in Curzon's honour.[79]

Curzon was 'critical of the British military's occupation of key buildings' in Delhi, Agra, and Lahore and the looting of materials from them by English visitors since 1857, believing it 'reflected poorly on the British occupation'.[80] Curzon's drive to see Indian historic monuments better cared for has been contrasted with the violent looting of the Benin Bronzes from Nigeria in 1897, equating two very different contexts to demonstrate that some British administrators felt a responsibility to look after indigenous monuments.[81] This comparison neglects India's claims to looted objects held in Britain, most famously those associated with Tipu Sultan, and also suggests that Curzon's role in initiating the infamous Younghusband Expedition of 1903 is overlooked when accounting for his own relationship with colonial loot. Alex McKay situates the invasion and looting in the context of European desire to gain access to Tibetan culture as well as the strategic advantages associated with it, and notes that Curzon's government was asked 'to support the acquisition of

[74] Vrdoljak, *International Law*, 96.
[75] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 70.
[76] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 64.
[77] Gilmour, *Curzon*, 178.
[78] Swenson, 'Crusader Heritages,' 54.
[79] Basu and Damodaran, 'Colonial Histories of Heritage,' 252; Thomas G. Hart, 'Gazetting and Historic Preservation in Kenya,' *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship,* iv (2007).
[80] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 356.
[81] Betts and Ross, 'Modern Historical Preservation,' 22-3.

Tibetan books and artefacts during the mission'.[82] Despite an official ban on looting during the Expedition, a huge volume of items was brought to Britain from Tibet and sold to museums and private collectors. Objects from Tibet at Kedleston Hall include a pair of ornate boxes, a Rag Dung, a Ke Tri sword, a tea table, a beer jug, a shawm, and a shrine. There is no link made to the Younghusband expedition on the Trust's Collections website but these objects are typical of those seen in museum collections from Tibet, and regardless of their provenance were surely tied to these events for Curzon. Further research into the provenance of the objects in Curzon's collection will help better understand these connections.

In his Speech to the Legislative Council in Calcutta regarding the Ancient Monuments Bill, Curzon argued that to date the British government had failed to recognise its responsibilities for historic conservation, but in recent years had ensured that buildings such as mosques repurposed by the British as a Dak Bungalow and Post Office had been restored.[83] The 1904 Ancient Monuments Act built on the 1888 Treasure Troves Act, which was intended to prevent the traffic of Indian antiquities outside India. Despite this, he suggested that the British had a greater responsibility than previous rulers 'for inaugurating a new era and for displaying that tolerant and enlightened respect to the treasures of all, which is one of the main lessons that the returning West has been able to teach the East'.[84] Curzon claimed that 'the British were the only people in India capable' of managing the preservation of historic monuments, in part because they were able to make judgements impartially and dispassionately, whereas Indian Hindu and Muslim communities had 'impassioned antipathy' towards one another's' monuments.[85] Curzon agreed with Lord Cunningham, who had established the Archaeological Survey of India, that Western populations could be 'entrusted with caring for their local heritage' whereas 'Indians had neither the foresight nor the facility to protect their objects of antiquity'.[86] The ideal of the enlightened British ruler

[82] Alex McKay, 'The British Invasion of Tibet, 1903-04,' *Inner Asia,* Vol. 14, No. 1 (2012), 5-25, 18-19.
[83] George Curzon, 'Ancient Monuments Bill,' in Sir Thomas Raleigh, *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from His Speeches as Viceroy & Governor General of India 1898-1905*, (London: MacMill & Co. Ltd., 1906), 219-220.
[84] Curzon, 'Archaeology and Ancient Monuments,' 200.
[85] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 67.
[86] Rajagopalan, *Building Histories,* 7.

knowing what was best for people overwhelmed by religious fanaticism and emotion 'became the trope of Curzon's imperial program'.[87] Ironically, Curzon referred to his role as Viceroy as a 'priestly duty',[88] and Gilmour describes him carrying out 'the preservationist mission…with biblical fervour'.[89] In Curzon's speech he argued that 'a race like our own' was best suited to care for Indian monuments associated with various religions and see them as equally interesting and valuable and therefore 'part of the heritage which Providence has committed to the custody of the ruling power'.[90] However, Curzon's secular approach meant that 'the layered history' of India's monuments and their specific significances and uses for different communities were often ignored.[91] Although, Indra Sengupta argues that despite the 1904 Act's origins and Curzon's focus on secularism, local religious groups were able to continue using monuments as they wanted.[92]

Memorials in India

In 1905, Curzon began his most famous restoration project at the Taj Mahal. The Taj Mahal is a seventeenth-century mausoleum in Agra constructed between 1632 and 1648. It was built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal. The mausoleum is built of white marble inlaid with semi-precious stones and contains the tombs of Mumtaz Mahal and of Shah Jahan. Having first seen the Taj in the 1880s, overseeing its restoration became 'paramount' for Curzon.[93] Characteristically obsessive and unable to delegate, he oversaw the conservation work in great detail, including the clothing worn by the workers looking after the tombs.[94] He also sourced a hanging lamp from Egypt which hangs inside the tomb's central dome, inscribed 'presented to the Tomb of Mumtaz Mahal by Lord Curzon 1906'. While Curzon placed great weight on the need for authenticity in the restoration of the buildings at the Taj Mahal, he chose to

[87] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 68.
[88] Eugenia Herbert, 'Curzon Nostalgia: Landscaping Historical Monuments in India,' *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes,* Vol 32 (2012), 277-296, 287.
[89] Gilmour, *Curzon*, 179.
[90] Curzon, 'Archaeology and Ancient Monuments,' 202-3.
[91] Vrdoljak, *International Law, Museums and the Return of Cultural Objects,* 96.
[92] Sengupta, 'Monument Preservation'.
[93] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 70.
[94] Gilmour, *Curzon*, 180-1.

redesign the gardens surrounding them. The memorial sits within seventeen hectares of gardens. When Curzon first visited the Taj Mahal, he spoke about it having 'one of the loveliest gardens anywhere to be seen' yet once he was Viceroy, he chose to radically alter it.[95] Curzon had a buffer zone created around the monument, separating it from the busy area immediately surrounding it as well as the wider city.[96] Curzon described the approach to the Taj before his alterations as being a walk through 'dusty wastes and a squalid bazaar', which he replaced with a park.[97] In doing so, he undermined the original design of the gardens, which had been a crucial element of the Taj Mahal's design. The Islamic gardens had represented Paradise, and James Dickie emphasises that 'the Indo-Islamic garden operated simultaneously on two levels: visually, on the upper level, as a living carpet; and, sensually, on a lower plane, as a place of shade and intimacy and cool repose'.[98] Originally, the Taj revealed itself from between the plants as visitors wandered through the gardens, and as recently as 1850, a visitor had described the garden being 'full of exotic fragrant flowers, fine old trees and much fruit'.[99] Far from what Curzon saw as 'scraggy trees and garish flowerbeds'[100], the gardens at the Taj were intended to overwhelm the senses, and achieving this effect required dense foliage. The fruits grown in the gardens contributed to the perfume of the garden as well as being also sold at the market.[101]

Curzon claimed to have restored the Taj Mahal to its original appearance.[102] Yet, as early as 1913, Constance Villiers-Stuart wrote a study of Mughal gardens in which she criticised Curzon's 'baleful influence on the restoration of Indian gardens' as part of a wider British failure to appreciate their artistic and symbolic elements.[103] Kavuri-Bauer suggests that Curzon either did not realise or care

[95] Herbert, 'Curzon Nostalgia,' 284.
[96] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 72.
[97] Curzon, 'Ancient Monuments Bill,' 216.
[98] James Dickie (Yaqub Zaki), 'The Mughal Garden: Gateway to Paradise,' *Muqarnas*, Vol. 3 (1985), 128-137, 130.
[99] 'The Taj Mahal, Agra, India,' *Historic Gardens Review*, No. 30 (2014), 42-3, 43.
[100] Gilmour, *Curzon*, 181.
[101] Eugenia Herbert, *Flora's Empire: British Gardens in India*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 203.
[102] Quoted in Linstrum, 'The Sacred Past,' 1.
[103] Herbert, 'Curzon Nostalgia,' 288.

that the overgrown foliage was an intentional part of the Islamic garden aesthetic.[104] Funerary and pleasure gardens were reconceived as leisure spaces and changes like the introduction of grass reflected British conventions and tastes.[105] Derek Linstrum and Florence Herbert both note that as an English landowner, Curzon was recreating the lawns which accompany British country houses at the Taj.[106] More generally, the convention of surrounding a large monument with neat lawns, whether a castle, a church, or historic house, was becoming popular across Britain, even more so between 1913 and 1933, when Charles Peers was Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments.[107] Sharma has described this as part of a wider 'monument-centric approach' which saw gardens as being separate, and therefore more malleable, to the built structures, which had to be conserved as they were.[108] This is perhaps reflected in the National Trust's practices to date; alterations to gardens and land seem to attract less discomfort than those made to buildings. Curzon reduced the role of the gardens to offset the buildings, replacing trees and cypresses with lawns and giving the monument an appearance ultimately closer to an English one and making the tomb look more solid and imposing, rather than being nestled among the treetops. In doing so, he turned the space into a viewing point, rather than a place to be experienced through multiple senses.

As a result of the changes Curzon made, the social function of the Taj Mahal was partially removed.[109] Turning a living public space into a preserved historic site created 'a temporal caesura that divorced the monument from its contemporary context'.[110] Moreover, it reflected Curzon's recognition that 'control of history is in some measure control of the present' and so sought to fix

[104] Kavuri-Bauer, *Monumental Matters,* 72.
[105] Sharma, 'The British Treatment of Historic Gardens in the Indian Subcontinent,' 215.
[106] Linstrum, 'The Last of the Augustans,' 32; Herbert, 'Curzon Nostalgia,' 287.
[107] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 129.
[108] Jyoti P. Sharma, 'The British Treatment of Historic Gardens in the Indian Subcontinent: The Transformation of Delhi's Nawab Safdarjung's Tomb Complex from a Funerary Garden into a Public Park,' *Garden History,* Vol 35, No. 2 (2007), 210-228, 214.
[109] Herbert, *Flora's Empire,* 209-210.
[110] Mrinalini Rajagopalan, *Building Histories: The Archival and Affective Lives of Five Monuments in Modern Delhi,* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 14.

Indian monuments 'forever in a past time'.[111] This reflects the ideas explored above about Indian heritage being reduced to a precursor for British rule. Photographs of the Taj Mahal before and after this restoration are included in the appendix of this thesis (see Images 2 and 3).

In parallel with the restoration of the Taj Mahal, Curzon oversaw the creation of the Victoria Memorial Hall in the centre of Calcutta. Queen Victoria's death in 1901 provided the 'opportunity to rival Shah Jahan in the creation of a funerary monument'.[112] This allowed Curzon to put his existing plans into action for a monument to the British Raj, creating the Victoria Memorial Hall as India's tribute to the late Queen and Empress. The building contains a historical museum and sits within sixty-four acres of gardens. The Hall was in many ways designed to offer a British reflection of the Taj, featuring similar 200ft high domes and Indo-Saracenic features built (see Image 4 in the Appendix). It was also built from the same high quality marble from Makrana as the Taj Mahal.[113] By building the Victoria Memorial with the same materials as the Taj, the design suggested the British Empire as something which had been (and would remain) around for a long time, while simultaneously making the Taj look more British through the alterations to the gardens.

Lord Esher, whose son would be President of the SPAB and Chairman of the National Trust's General Purposes Committee and Historical Buildings Committee, was Secretary to the Office of Works when Curzon was designing the Victoria Memorial Hall and recommended William Emerson, the architect, for the project.[114] Curzon and Esher were friends, having attended Eton together, and Esher claimed credit for instigating the redesign of the Mall as part of London's parallel Victoria Memorial.[115] The London memorial stands in front of Buckingham Palace and

[111] Herbert, *Flora's Empire,* 223.
[112] Herbert, *Flora's Empire,* 224.
[113] Bhattacharya, 'Taj of the Raj,' 524.
[114] George Curzon, *British Government in India: The Story of the Viceroys and Government Houses, Volume I* (London: Cassel and Company, Ltd, 1925), 189-190.
[115] Tori Smith, '"A Grand Work of noble Conception": the Victoria Memorial and Imperial London,' in Felix Driver and David Gilbert (Eds.), *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 23.

was funded by contributions from across the Empire, but India was to have its own. The Victoria Memorial in London was designed by Thomas Brock and was unveiled in 1911. Brock's memorial is comprised of a marble, granite and bronze and features a statue of Victoria, topped with a gold winged figure representing Victory. Curzon also had Victory replicated and placed on top of the Victoria Memorial Hall, providing a clear link between the London and Calcutta memorials.[116]

Curzon conceived the memorial as a history lesson in the form of a building.[117] But what did he intend its viewers to learn? Curzon perceived historic buildings as being more trustworthy and authentic records of history than written accounts. This maps onto the broader approach of the British government to Indian heritage, which prioritised physical structures and objects of antiquary as 'written histories were either scarce or unreliable' and ancient buildings were seen as accurate records of the past.[118] Curzon defined the Memorial as a historical museum and a national gallery of the arts.[119] In the galleries of the Victoria Memorial Hall, Curzon proposed 'from the contents of a few cases we might grasp the outlines of history more vividly than from a library of books'.[120] Deliberations about what types of objects could be displayed in the galleries centred on this definition of the Victoria Memorial Hall as a historical museum. Ghosh notes that Curzon was 'careful to distinguish the permanent from the temporary' and specified all the types of object that would not be suitable.[121] The Hall would not contain a library, as a project was already underway to convert the Metcalfe Hall into the Imperial Library with the help of the British Museum's librarian, opened by Curzon in 1903.[122] Oil paintings and photographic portraits were prioritised, which Tapati Guha-Thakurta suggests enabled the visitor to move back and forth

[116] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 365.
[117] G.H.R. Tillotson, 'A Visible Monument: Architectural Policies and the Victoria Memorial Hall,' in Philippa Vaughan (Ed.), *The Victoria Memorial Hall Calcutta: Conception, Collections, Conservation*, (Marg Publications and The Calcutta Tercentenary Trust, 1997), 10.
[118] Rajagopalan, *Building Histories,* 7.
[119] George Curzon, 'Asiatic Society of Bengal,' 26 February 1901, *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from His Speeches as Viceroy and Governor-General of India, 1898-1905* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1906), 545.
[120] Curzon, 'Asiatic Society of Bengal,' 538-9.
[121] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 354.
[122] Curzon, 'Asiatic Society of Bengal,' 546.

between ‘the regalia of the Coronation Durbar or the breathtaking Calcutta panoramas’ and the “real life” of the Bourne and Shepherd photographs of administrators and former viceroys displayed alongside Mughal miniatures.[123]

Curzon referred to the monument as the ‘All-India Victoria Memorial’, yet he did not consult regional leaders and did not consult anyone for their input on its design. He treated his own ideas for the memorial as ‘the most natural and logical response to public grief’.[124] The Memorial was designed in 1901 and the foundation stone was laid by the Prince of Wales in 1906 but construction of the superstructure did not begin until 1910. A combination of the structure’s sinking foundation, the inability to raise sufficient funds, and anticolonial activists threatening to sabotage the building’s electricity supply all contributed to the Victoria Memorial Hall’s slow progress.[125] In 1921 the Memorial was formally opened by the new Prince of Wales during his tour of India, a ceremony that was boycotted by the Indian National Congress, in keeping with its non-cooperation policy.[126] Curzon had hoped to bequeath England ‘something that will conquer Death, and be better than gold’ in reference to the Kipling poem, *The Song of the Cities,* but the Victoria Memorial Hall was ‘already a relic of fading empire’ by 1921.[127] Curzon never saw the Victoria Memorial Hall in person but took great pride in its creation despite the significant controversy surrounding it. The representation of Indian history at the Victoria Memorial Hall is discussed further below.

‘India is not a Land that can Afford Useless Ornaments’

More than anything else, the focus of the Victoria Memorial Hall for Curzon was visual. Paralleling his transformation of the Taj Mahal into a primarily visual space that would educate the viewer,

[123] Guha-Thakurta, ‘Traversing Past and Present,’ 152.
[124] Tillotson, ‘A Visible Monument,’ 8.
[125] Ghosh, ‘Stabilizing History,’ 359.
[126] John Plunkett, ‘A Tale of Two Statues: Memorializing Queen Victoria in London and Calcutta,’ *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century,* 33 (2022).
[127] Herbert, *Flora’s Empire,* 226.

the priority for Curzon was how the building would appear from outside.[128] Curzon stated in his 1901 speech about the memorial that the Queen's 'name and virtues' would be commemorated by 'some enduring monument' that would 'hand down to later ages a visible memorial of our veneration and of her wonderful and glorious reign'.[129] Again, Curzon described it as 'an enduring monument of India's place in world-history and of the wonderful record of Queen Victoria's reign'[130] The Victoria Memorial Hall 'was history reconstructed in tangible, visible, arresting form'.[131] This focus on endurance and visibility is at the centre of Curzon's interest in the preservation and creation of monuments. Ghosh emphasises that in this period 'installing statues was a way to stabilize a colonialist version of history by making it publicly *visible*, seemingly *permanent*, and *educational*'.[132] This understanding of the purpose of statues applies more broadly to Curzon's historic preservation in Britain as well as India.

Curzon proposed that individuals would be represented at the Victoria Memorial Hall through portraits, busts, and mementos throughout the Hall. The 'Valhalla' would include 'pioneers of commerce and empire', governors, viceroys, and other colonial administrators; military men; men of letters and science; historians and antiquarians; jurists; explorers and pioneers; reformers and philanthropists, churchmen, and missionaries.[133] Statues of key military and political figures such as Robert Clive and Arthur Wellesley are placed throughout the interior of the hall. Fiona Candlin notes that Curzon's inclusion of historical figures was 'carefully situated', and subsumed 'specifically Indian achievements or histories' within Britain and India's shared history under the 'guise of parity'.[134] Curzon made a point of including representations of individuals who fought against the British at the Victoria Memorial Hall 'provided that their memories are not sullied

[128] Tillotson, 'A Visible Monument,' 11 (emphasis my own).
[129] George Curzon, 'Queen Victoria Memorial,' 6 February 1901, *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from His Speeches as Viceroy and Governor-General of India, 1898-1905* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1906), 517.
[130] Curzon, *British Government in India,* 180.
[131] Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy,* 80.
[132] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 352-353.
[133] Curzon, 'Asiatic Society of Bengal,' 534-5.
[134] Candlin, 'The Politics of Work Restoration and Imperialism,' 31-32.

with dishonour or crime'.[135] A painting of the death of Tipu Sultan from the Nawab of Murshidabad was allowed, but there would be no memorial to 'the fringe *pagri* or a ruffian like the Nana Sahib'.[136] Post-independence, the state government added a gallery to the Victoria Memorial displaying portraits of national leaders and in 1992 the Calcutta Gallery was added.[137]

Curzon intended the Victoria Memorial Hall to embody imperial spectacle with Victoria and himself at the centre. Curzon was the last Governor-General to serve in India under Victoria, and one of the defining moments of his Viceroyalty was the 1903 Delhi Durbar held to commemorate the new King's coronation. In his own lifetime, Curzon ensured he would be seen within the Hall through R.T. MacKenzie's painting of the arrival of the Viceroy and Vicereine at the 1903 Durbar, leading the procession of elephants, as well as the statues of him.[138] Curzon's own uniforms were displayed in the Hall alongside one of Mary's dresses, paralleling the display of her Peacock Dress at Kedleston Hall, which is now a major attraction for the National Trust.[139] The Victoria Memorial Hall had two statues of Victoria – Brock's inside the central hall, George Frampton's outside – and two of Curzon. Fittingly, the lawn next to the south entrance to the Victoria Memorial Hall containing the statue of Curzon is also named after him, followed by Edward Lawn, named after Edward VIII: 'both are edged with neat strips of shrubbery and flowerbeds, very much like the approach to an English manor house'.[140] The larger statue of Curzon at the Victoria Memorial Hall was sculpted by Hamo Thornycroft, inspired by his statue of William Gladstone, former British Prime Minister, in London, and was surrounded by four allegorical figures. The chosen cornerstones represented peace, commerce, agriculture, and famine relief. The Thornycroft

[135] Curzon, 'Asiatic Society of Bengal,' 534.
[136] Curzon, 'Asiatic Society of Bengal,' 534.
[137] Gupta, 'India and the European Cultural Inheritance,' 38-9.
[138] Deborah Swallow, 'Curzon's "National Gallery": The Art Collections,' in Philippa Vaughan (Ed.), *The Victoria Memorial Hall Calcutta: Conception, Collections, Conservation*, (Marg Publications and The Calcutta Tercentenary Trust, 1997), 56.
[139] 'Textile,' Victoria Memorial website, https://www.victoriamemorial-cal.org/collection/viewcollection/textile/en, accessed 20 September 2023; 'Our Work Caring for Lady Mary Curzon's Peacock Dress,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/peak-district-derbyshire/kedleston-hall/our-work-caring-for-lady-mary-curzons-peacock-dress, accessed 20 September 2023.
[140] Herbert, *Flora's Empire*, 226.

statue was removed from its plinth post-Independence and replaced with a statue of Sri Aurobindo, Indian philosopher, and nationalist.[141] The second statue, by F. W. Pomeroy, stood on a pedestal outside the north entrance to the Victoria Memorial Hall, with bas-reliefs depicting Curzon receiving the leaders of the Northwest Frontier Province, promoting railways and commerce, and unveiling the Black Hole of Calcutta memorial.

When Curzon commissioned the Victoria Memorial Hall he was able to dismiss the nationalist movement, but by the time the monument was completed, there was widespread support for Independence in India.[142] The beginnings of this lay in Curzon's own viceroyalty, with the Partition of Bengal having sparked the Swadeshi Movement instead of quelling protest as he had intended, and the construction of the Victoria Memorial Hall took place during a period of nationalist criticism of the government's handling of famines.[143] Curzon 'insisted that funding for famine relief would not decline for the sake of raising money to build the memorial'.[144] The statue of Curzon which had stood outside the main entrance of the Victoria Memorial Hall was removed to Flagstaff House in Barrackpore in 1969, following other statues of British figures' journeys to other buildings, parks, and storage facilities. Key among these is Coronation Park, where the Delhi Durbars of 1877, 1903 and 1911 were held. Paul McGarr has suggested that it was fitting that Curzon would be the final 'significant' subject of iconoclasm in India as someone 'so intimately associated with the revival of modern Indian nationalism' which arose in response to the Partition of Bengal.[145] In Kolkata, many statues were moved to Barrackpore, including the one of Curzon removed from the Victoria Memorial Hall, where special permission is required to see them.[146] The statues are now relatively unseen, failing in their purpose of representing permanence.

[141] Gupta, 'India and the European Cultural Inheritance,' 47.
[142] Bhattacharya, 'Taj of the Raj,' 526.
[143] Bhattacharya, 'Taj of the Raj,' 527-529.
[144] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 359.
[145] Paul M. McGarr, '"The Viceroys are Disappearing from the Roundabout in Delhi": British Symbols of Power in Post-Colonial India,' *Modern Asian Studies*, 49:3 (2015), 787-831, 825-6.
[146] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 368.

As the foundation stone of the Victoria Memorial Hall was laid in 1906, textile mills and factories in the rural areas surrounding Kolkata were being set on fire in protest.[147] The same year, the statue of Victoria in Chittagong was tarred, in 1907 the statue of her in Delhi's crown was struck off during riots, in 1908 a statue of her was covered in tar, its nose pulled off and sceptre broken in Nagpur, and in 1908 another was vandalised at Benares.[148] This was despite Victoria's relative appeal as an imperial leader, who Plunkett suggests was a mutable figure who could easily be reimagined to fit the interests of various segments of the Indian population.[149] Despite Curzon's presentation of the Victoria Memorial Hall as a widely agreed-upon memorial with universal appeal, from the beginning he had to defend this choice of tribute. Curzon spent large parts of his speeches about the Victoria Memorial Hall defending its placement in Calcutta; by the time the Memorial was complete, the capital of India had moved to Delhi.[150] Moreover, Curzon's vision for the all-India Memorial was not reflected in the final design, with collections 'oriented towards a British history and Indian dignitaries…markedly under-represented' and the political context of its opening meaning that it was immediately 'recognised as an anachronism, quite literally, a memorial to a British Empire that was already tangibly in decline'.[151] In 1920 an anonymous letter to *The Times of India* wrote that 'India is not a land that can afford useless ornaments'.[152] Others proposed setting up charitable funds in Victoria's name, which Curzon argued risked lacking the memorability of a monument. Curzon stated that Victoria would be better remembered through a 'visible and speaking monument' than through an endowment that could be used for a different purpose in the future.[153] Local memorials were also created, often with subscriptions rather than monuments as their outcomes, including Lady Curzon's own memorial scheme which took the form of a scholarship fund for midwives, extending the Dufferin Fund.[154]

[147] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 350.
[148] Plunkett, 'A Tale of Two Statues'.
[149] Plunkett, 'A Tale of Two Statues'.
[150] Plunkett, 'A Tale of Two Statues'.
[151] Candlin, 'The Politics of Work Restoration and Imperialism,' 32.
[152] Quoted in Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 359.
[153] Curzon, 'Asiatic Society of Bengal,' 26 February 1901, 520.
[154] Plunkett, 'A Tale of Two Statues'.

The irony of Curzon's justification for the built monument being its ability to better ensure Victoria's memory than a charitable fund is reflected in the use of the building and its grounds today, which sees its imperial legacy 'not forgotten but re-purposed for the needs of the present'.[155] The Victoria Memorial in London has, similarly to the Victoria Memorial Hall, failed to maintain Victoria's association and memory, with central monument 'faded into a kind of prominent obscurity' used as 'a vantage point…to peer into the domestic abode of the late twentieth-century monarchy'.[156] Bhattacharya suggests that the colonial history of the Victoria Memorial Hall is largely ignored by its visitors today, and what remains of the historic interest is commodified rather than 'sacral' in the way that Curzon had intended it to be.[157] The Victoria Memorial stands in the former 'White Town' area of Kolkata and prior to 1948 had a 'Europeans only' swimming pool in its gardens.[158] Tourism which does offer Raj Nostalgia is relatively limited and often contrasts the "before and after" of buildings post-Independence.[159] Gupta places the museumification of national leaders' homes post-independence within the tradition of Curzon's Victoria Memorial[160], which could also be linked to other examples of country houses and plantation houses turned into heritage sites, as discussed in chapters Four and Five.

When Curzon restored the Black Hole of Calcutta Memorial, he recreated it in marble, again 'aligning it with the aesthetic of older monuments such as the Taj Mahal'.[161] However, the 'very material alterations' Curzon made to the memorial's inscription changed is narrative in light of new historical evidence, unintentionally undermining the Victorian account of one of the foundational moments in the British colonisation of India.[162] Curzon was aware that historic memorials often fail to ensure remembrance. During his first year as Viceroy, Curzon discovered

[155] Bhattacharya, 'Taj of the Raj,' 536.
[156] Smith, '"A Grand Work of noble Conception",' 36.
[157] Bhattacharya, 'Taj of the Raj,' 537-8.
[158] Gupta, 'India and the European Cultural Inheritance,' 45.
[159] Bhattacharya, 'Taj of the Raj,' 536.
[160] Gupta, 'India and the European Cultural Inheritance,' 41-42.
[161] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 358.
[162] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History,' 358. For further detail, see Partha Chatterjee, *Black Hole of Empire: The History of a Global Practice of Power,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

that the memorial plaque marking the site of Sir Henry Lawrence's death during the 1857 Indian Rebellion was in the wrong room at the British Residency in Lucknow. In an anecdote he wrote about visiting the Residency, he noted the 'carelessness with which people observe, or rather fail to observe, that which is daily and even hourly under their eyes':

> 'Of the millions of persons who pass in the year through Trafalgar Square, how many could tell you the number or identity of the bronze heroes who adorn or disfigure its open spaces?...How many people who daily drive or ride past the nude Achilles in Hyde Park take the trouble to inquire how he came there or what he represents?…Familiarity breeds not merely contempt, but in the case of ordinary objects, or objects which we encounter every day, complete forgetfulness if we have ever known, complete indifference if we have not.'[163]

Here Curzon was concerned with the accuracy with which people understand and remember events through historic monuments. In the case of the Victoria Memorial Hall, its changing image and purpose lead it to reflect history a little more accurately: 'rather than crystallize the enduring legacy of [the] British presence in India, the Victoria Memorial Hall represents the political and cultural instability of imperialism'.[164]

Conclusion

Curzon's involvement in historic preservation in India and England contributed to the creation of heritage as a source of imperial identity in the early twentieth century. Historic preservation is often thought about as being used to stabilise history, creating an official image of the past that supports a dominant, agreed-upon narrative. This is particularly applicable to national and imperial monuments, as seen in Curzon's work in India. While the restoration of Tattershall Castle was seen as a national victory, it was also part of the imperial project. Curzon's restoration of

[163] George Curzon, '"Lest We Forget": The Death-Bed of Sir Henry Lawrence,' in Peter King (Ed.), *A Viceroy's India: Leaves from Lord Curzon's Note-Book*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson), 77.
[164] Bhattacharya, 'Taj of the Raj,' 537.

Mughal buildings in India shaped his approach to preservation in the UK, and the 1904 Ancient Monuments Preservation Act was used by Curzon as a precedent for the creation of the 1913 Ancient Monuments Act. The idea that England had a uniquely rich built heritage because of a lack of conquest and revolution, as Curzon suggested in Parliament, was important to the justification of the country house's place as a defining part of English heritage over the next few decades, which is discussed further in Chapter Five.

Both in India and in Britain, Curzon had a large impact on the creation and preservation of historic monuments and memorials. Referencing his restoration work in Agra, Curzon wrote to Mary, his wife, 'if I have never done anything else in India…I have written my name here, and the letters are a living joy'.[165] However, in India his attempts to make his vision of history endure were limited in their success, particularly post-Independence, when historic monuments were repurposed and reinvented repeatedly. To some extent, in England Curzon's narrative has been better preserved. In the following chapters, I consider how the National Trust has promoted aristocratic histories which serve former country house owners' narratives, continuing to use Curzon as a case study in Chapter Six. The construction of a new historic monument, the Victoria Memorial Hall, is considered in this chapter in relation to historic preservation because it served a related purpose as preserving existing monuments for Curzon.

Throughout this thesis, the overlap between the preservation of existing memorials and the construction of new ones is seen in examples across India, Britain, and the United States. The next chapter considers similar examples of memorialisation in the Transatlantic context and details the National Trust's relationship with the US National Trust for Historic Preservation.

[165] Curzon to Mary Curzon (Leiter), 4 April 1904, quoted in David Gilmour, *Curzon*, 320.

Chapter 4 Transatlantic Heritage

Perhaps the strongest international connection the National Trust had in its early years was with the US, and throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the Trust continued to appeal to the notion of England as the motherland and home of the United States' ancestors. From its founding, the Trust collaborated with American preservationists, while simultaneously protecting historic sites from being transferred across the Atlantic, as seen in its involvement with Tattershall Castle. This combination of collaboration and resistance sat within the broader changing relationship between Britain and the US as competitors and allies. In this chapter, I explore the National Trust's continued connection to the US in greater detail, in relation to the types of history it sought to preserve. To understand how the National Trust presents the past today, it is essential to understand the context in which it formed its historical narratives. This Chapter focuses on the Transatlantic context. The Trust's relationship with American preservationists at the turn of the twentieth century demonstrated by Melanie Hall was extended by the creation of an independent national trust based in Washington in 1949, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). Drawing on the work of Sam Edwards, I link this development to the wider trend within historic preservation which sought to foster and commemorate a shared Transatlantic past. The first section of this chapter looks in more detail at the National Trust's connections to historic preservation in the United States. Picking up on my discussion of Transatlantic preservation efforts, which focused on a shared ancestry between Britain and the US, this discussion details correspondence between the National Trust and the newly established American National Trust for Historic Preservation and its member organisation, Colonial Williamsburg, from 1949 to 1956. Situating this moment in the context of the Cold War, I note how collaborations between heritage organisations were implicitly and explicitly political. I then broaden to consider some other examples of national trusts which were created around the world, using the specific examples of Ireland, Australia, and Jamaica. This further contextualises the Trust's relationship with the United States and continues my earlier discussion of the Trust's connections to imperialism. The

final section explores further examples of historic sites the Trust preserved with Transatlantic connections and connects this to the creation of statues of famous historical individuals. This builds on the points raised in the previous chapter, in which Curzon used historic preservation and created new monuments simultaneously to shape perceptions and narratives of the colonial past.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation and Colonial Williamsburg

Although an American branch of the National Trust existed from 1901-1904[1], the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), independently based in Washington, was not founded until 1949. The NTHP was partly formed to take on some of the properties that the overwhelmed National Park Service did not have the capacity for.[2] When the National Trust reported the creation of the NTHP it reminded readers that it was a product of long-standing Transatlantic collaboration, as the Trust's constitution had been based on the Trustees of Public Reservations of Massachusetts: 'the idea has thus recrossed the Atlantic 55 years after our foundation'.[3] The National Trust offered the NTHP 'at its disposal the valuable experience acquired during over 55 years' work in this country'.[4] Between 1949 and 1956 Frederick Rath was the director of the NTHP and under his leadership the organization moved to a different model than the National Trust, becoming 'essentially an advocacy organization that pressed the cause on Congress and the executive branch, rather than make a priority of owning and managing historic sites itself'.[5] In the 1950s, the National Trust developed its working relationship with the NTHP and particularly one of its member organisations: Colonial Williamsburg. Williamsburg was the historic capital of

[1] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 356.
[2] John H. Sprinkle Jr., 'Historic Preservation Was Never Static,' in *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States,* ed. Randall Mason and Max Page, [Second Edition] (New York: Routledge, 2020), 377.
[3] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1949-50, (London: Spottiswoode, Ballantyne and Co., Ltd., 1950), 26.
[4] National Trust Report 1949-50, 26.
[5] Paul Lewis, 'Frederick Rath, 87, Pioneer of Historical Conservation,' *New York Times*, 8 April 2001, 46, https://www.nytimes.com/2001/04/08/nyregion/frederick-rath-87- pioneer-of-historical-conservation.html, accessed 22 February 2022.

Virginia when it was an English colony, and the process of reconstruction of what is now its Historic Area began in 1926 when Rev. Dr. William Archer Rutherfoord Goodwin first showed it to John D. Rockefeller Jr., who agreed to finance the project. A living history museum, Colonial Williamsburg was intended as a reproduction of eighteenth-century American life that told the story, according to Rockefeller, 'of the patriotism, high purpose, and unselfish devotion of our forefathers to the common good'.[6]

The National Trust first approached Colonial Williamsburg in December 1955, when representatives visited London to present the Williamsburg Award to Winston Churchill. The Award had been newly established to honour a person 'who in the course of contemporary events has made an outstanding contribution to the historic struggle of men to live free and self-respecting in a just society'.[7] Jack Rathbone, the Trust's Secretary, saw the Williamsburg Trustees' visit as an opportunity to foster a relationship between the two organisations. Rathbone convinced the Trust that they should host a party in the visitors' honour, writing that 'these people have fabulous Rockefeller millions behind them' and that Jack Patterson, Consultant on Public Relations at Colonial Williamsburg, agreed 'this might be a good occasion to establish some form of goodwill relations'.[8] Horace Albright, the conservationist known for his involvement in the founding of the US National Park Service, was invited to the Williamsburg Award Dinner. Frederick Rath, Director of the NTHP, wrote to Rathbone to let him know that he had spoken to Albright about 'both Trusts, and our mutual interest' and promised that he could 'do a great deal to cement the relationship between us'.[9] Rathbone wrote to Lord Crawford, the National Trust's Chairman, explaining the rationale for the party as an opportunity for good publicity and potential financial

[6] James M. Lindgren, '"A Spirit that Fires the Imagination": Historic Preservation and Cultural Regeneration in Virginia and New England, 1850-1950,' in *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*, eds. Randall Mason and Max Page, [Second Edition] (New York: Routledge, 2020), 58.
[7] 'The Williamsburg Award', description of the award, undated, Unique ID 9161, Folder 'Colonial Williamsburg: Relationship', National Trust Archive. (Correspondence from this folder hereafter cited 9161, NT Archive).
[8] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to M. McCreery, 10 October 1955, 9161, NT Archive.
[9] Correspondence from Frederick L. Rath, Jr. to Jack Rathbone, 30 Nov 1955, 9161, NT Archive.

support through the development of the Trust's US connections.[10] He proposed to invite roughly one hundred people and to fund the party with the Trust's publicity grant.

The Publicity Committee agreed to hold the party for the Williamsburg trustees on the 5th of December and the following weeks of correspondence detail flower arrangements, menus, traffic controls, and detailed guestlist plans. The Williamsburg party was held at the Blewcoat School on Caxton Street, London, which the Trust had purchased the year before. Photographs of National Trust properties were displayed in the basement where guests dropped off and picked up their coats.[11] The party was considered a success and a report of the event was included in the Williamsburg Award Proceedings Book the following year.[12] Lord Esher, at this time Chairman of the Trust's General Purposes Committee and Historical Buildings Committee, Lord Crawford, and Rathbone were invited to the Williamsburg Award dinner[13] and the Trust received a £25 donation from the Colonial Williamsburg Trustees in January 1956[14], which may have been payment for Williamsburg's National Trust Corporate Membership.[15] Letters exchanged between individuals working for the National Trust and Colonial Williamsburg all suggested that this was the beginning of a mutually beneficial friendship between their organisations, and proposed that Rathbone might visit the US.[16] In 1956, Rathbone went on a six-week tour in the US across September and October at the end of which he joined Lord Esher in Colonial Williamsburg.

Rathbone's visit to the United States was first proposed by Frederick Rath in the summer of 1954 during his own visit to the National Trusts of England and Scotland, but had been prevented by

[10] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Lord Crawford, 25 October 1955, 9161, NT Archive.
[11] Correspondence from Miss Hunter to Jack Rathbone, 17 Nov 1955; Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Miss Hunter, 21 Nov 1955, 9161, NT Archive (Presumably Dorothy Hunter (1881-1977), daughter of Trust founder Robert Hunter, who supported the NT).
[12] Correspondence from C.E. Holley, 14 November 1956, 9161, NT Archive
[13] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Lord Crawford, 27 Oct 1955, 9161, NT Archive.
[14] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to John M. Patterson 11 January 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[15] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Lord Esher, 7 February 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[16] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Kenneth Chorley, 8 December 1955; Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Frederick Rath Jr., 9 December 1955; Correspondence from Kenneth Chorley to Jack Rathbone, 27 December 1955; Correspondence from John M. Patterson to Jack Rathbone, 28 December 1955, 9161, NT Archive.

limited funds.[17] When the NTHP decided to hold its course on "Historic Housekeeping" in collaboration with the New York State Historical Association in 1956, Rath and Dr Louis C. Jones, Museum Director at Cooperstown, decided to invite Rathbone to present an 'illustrated talk on [the] operation of historic house museums in England'.[18] A schedule outlines Rathbone's visit, during which he visited key historic organisations and sites including the Winterthur Museum in Delaware, the Du Pont Museum in Washington, the National Parks Service, Cooperstown and Newport in New York, The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, the NTHP's office in Washington, and Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia.[19] When planning his visit, Rathbone repeatedly referenced a need to justify the trip, which he suggested would be possible 'by enhanced Anglo-American goodwill, and by the attraction of more visitors to our properties and more members to both our Trusts'.[20] Rathbone applied for a travel grant from the English-Speaking Union to support his visit, an organisation founded by Evelyn Wrench in 1918, who also founded the Overseas League and the All People's Association.[21]

Charles Hosmer emphasises that the early years of the NTHP were shaped by the Cold War, and this context does appear sparingly in the National Trust's correspondence.[22] In May 1956, Jack Patterson wrote to Rathbone to inform him that the new Director of Public Relations for Colonial Williamsburg was Lucius Battle, former Secretary for NATO in Paris.[23] Patterson, who was previously Press Counsellor at the US Embassy[24], was now also appointed Executive Vice-

[17] Correspondence from Frederick Rath to Mr. Richard T. Hamilton, 16 February 1956, 9162, 'American Tour by the Secretary,' National Trust Archive.
[18] Correspondence from Frederick Rath to Mr. Richard T. Hamilton, 16 February 1956, 9162, 'American Tour by the Secretary,' National Trust Archive.
[19] 'Mr. Rathbone's Visit to America,' schedule, 14 September – 26 October 1956, 9162, 'American Tour by the Secretary,' National Trust Archive.
[20] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Frederick Rath, 13 February 1956, 9161, 'Colonial Williamsburg: Relationship,' National Trust Archive.
[21] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Haringe Scholle, 9162, 'American Tour by the Secretary,' National Trust Archive.
[22] Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Preservation Comes of Age: From Williamsburg to the National Trust, 1926-1949 Volume I*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the Preservation Press, 1981), 3.
[23] Correspondence from Jack Patterson to Jack Rathbone, 11 May 1956, 9162, 'American Tour by the Secretary,' National Trust Archive.
[24] Memorandum from Jack Rathbone to M. McCreery, 10 October 1955, 9161, 'Colonial Williamsburg: Relationship,' National Trust Archive.

President of the Crusade for Freedom, a Cold War propaganda campaign which ran from 1950-1960 in the US. In a letter to Rathbone, Patterson updated him that Helen Burgess' (a founding member of the NTHP) husband, Randy, was the new ambassador to NATO.[25] A Special Survey Committee led by John C. Goodbody and Kershaw Burbank was also set up in 1950 'to research, plan, and implement the idea of expanding Colonial Williamsburg's mission in order to influence world affairs', with a particular eye to Cold War developments.[26] Esher and Rathbone's visits to the US occurred just before the Suez Crisis unfolded. When Rathbone returned to England, he received a letter from Frederick Rath in which he commented about the 'new international crisis' and reassured Rathbone that his visit had been a success, that 'in the public relations sense you could hardly have done a better job', and that this visit, along with the NTHP's previous visit to Britain, had 'in a very small way, helped Anglo-American relations'.[27]

This political context, while distinct from the preceding decades of Transatlantic heritage collaboration, echoes the Trust's early hopes to contribute to shared "Anglo-Saxon" identity, but now in the context of the Cold War and as the British Empire was declining. As much as a shared white identity, the shared heritage of Britain and the US was also being used to bolster Cold War propaganda. When the National Trust was looking for "VIPs" to assist in publicising the Trust's work in the US in the 1950s, Rathbone wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Henry W. Nugent Head as a potential candidate.[28] Nugent Head was a British Officer who served in India in the 1920s, in North Africa between British and American forces during WWII, and as Commandant of the School of Mountain Warfare in Lebanon, and was remembered for having 'devoted much of his time…furthering improved British-American relations' after he retired.[29] On the advice of Frank

[25] Correspondence from Jack Patterson to Jack Rathbone, 9 July 1957, 9161, 'Colonial Williamsburg: Relationship,' National Trust Archive.
[26] Luke Edward Roberts, 'Colonial Williamsburg, National Identity, and Cold War Patriotism,' (MA Thesis, College of William & Mary, 2004), 25.
[27] Letter from Frederick Rath to Jack Rathbone, 31 October 1956, Unique ID 9162, 'American Tour by the Secretary,' National Trust Archive. (Correspondence from this folder hereafter cited 9162, NT Archive.)
[28] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Lt. Col. Henry W. Nugent Head, 9 April 1956, 9162, NT Archive.
[29] 'Col. Henry W. N. Head, 66, Dies; Sportsman and British Officer,' *New York Times*, 17 June 1964, 43, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1964/06/17/106979124.html?pageNumber=43, accessed 22 February 2022.

Darvall, Director of the English-Speaking Union, the Trust also considered Lydia Bond Powel, Keeper of the American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art[30], and Winthrop Aldrich, once his term as Ambassador in Britain came to an end, as potential representatives for the Trust in the US.[31] Immediately after the Second World War ended and in the context of the early Cold War, the US government saw cultural programs as 'tools of empire' and professionalised cultural diplomacy.[32] This saw the government take on more responsibility in this area, rather than continuing to leave it to less official, amateurish bodies.

Lord Esher was invited to give a speech at a dinner held at the Williamsburg Inn during his tour in 1956. Speaking to an audience of employees and other professionals, as well as plantation owners, he stated that the setting they were in 'remind(s) us so vividly and so romantically of our common ancestors'.[33] During his speech, Esher spoke about the changing world order of the twentieth century, lamenting what he called 'the disappearance of power':

> 'In the nineteenth century when we policed the world with our fleet we hardly ever used it, but everybody knew that Lord Palmerston would use it if pressed too hard. In the twentieth century you police the world with your bombs, and everybody knows you will not use them. The element of power that lies behind the policeman has gone.'[34]

Playing on the idea of Britain as the Mother Country, Esher stated that the United States 'does not often listen to what we say, still more so because no one listens to what mother says', but that ultimately they shared the same beliefs in freedom and civilization, reaffirming a sense of Transatlantic friendship.[35] Esher also expressed a wish for the money spent on conventional weapons in Britain to go to the arts. Lucius Battle wrote to Rathbone praising Esher's speech and

[30] Correspondence from Frederick Rath, Jr. to Mrs. Lydia Bond Power, 20 February 1956, 9162, NT Archive.
[31] Note (presumably written by Jack Rathbone), 29 August 1956, 9162, NT Archive.
[32] Michael Krenn, *The History of United States Cultural Diplomacy: 1770 to the Present Day,* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 65.
[33] Transcript of speech given by Lord Esher, 26 October 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[34] Transcript of speech given by Lord Esher, 26 October 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[35] Transcript of speech given by Lord Esher, 26 October 1956, 9161, NT Archive.

letting him know that copies of the transcript would be held in the Williamsburg archives and that he might 'look at them from time to time and steal a charming phrase or two' but that they would 'not be turned over to the press', keeping it private.[36]

Lord Esher and Rathbone's visits to the US were preceded by other collaborations between national trust organisations in Britain and in North America. While planning his 1956 tour, Rathbone wrote to John Kerr of the Scottish National Trust asking about a previous visit to North America, who replied that they had had success in Canada where many of their audiences were comprised of Scottish Societies.[37] Lord Crawford had visited the NTHP in Washington in January 1951, where he gave a speech that was reportedly received as an 'inspiration to us in our efforts to emulate its example'.[38] In the November before the Williamsburg party the English National Trust's Deputy Secretary, Joshua Rowley, had also visited the US representing the Trust. Mr. A. D. Kennedy, Assistant Secretary of the National Trust for Scotland, also visited National Trust houses to compare the problems of the English and Scottish Trusts.[39] Much of the Trust's relationship with American organisations was linked to fundraising. When the Trust accepted the Lucy family's offer of Charlecote House in 1945 and retrospectively had to source funding to maintain the property, Donald Macleod Matheson, until recently the Trust's Secretary, had offered 'to go on a begging tour to the United States'.[40] While generating further income and publicity for the National Trust through their American networks, a constant consideration surrounding Rathbone's American Tour was about avoiding pointed appeals for money. When planning the Williamsburg party, Rathbone wrote in one letter that, 'I think too direct an appeal might be undiplomatic, but I do think we might leave some membership leaflets somewhere'.[41]

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[36] Correspondence from Lucius D. Battle to Rathbone, 31 October 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[37] Correspondence from John Kerr to Jack Rathbone, 21 February 1956, 9162, NT Archive.
[38] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1950-51, (London: Spottiswoode, Ballantyne and Co., Ltd., 1951), 30.
[39] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1955-56, (London: Spottiswoode, Ballantyne and Co., Ltd., 1956), 32-3.
[40] James Lees-Milne, *People and Places: Country House Donors and the National Trust*, (John Murray, 1992), 130.
[41] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Miss Hunter, 21 November 1955, 9161, NT Archive.

The Trust's support from Americans continues today. In 1975 the Royal Oak Foundation was created with the mission 'to help the Trust's friends in the United States to support conservation projects in Britain that may take their fancy' and 'to encourage their closer association with the Trust's activities by various means, including visits to its properties by US students and by others who are closely concerned with Anglo-American culture and friendship'.[42] As the Country Houses Scheme began in 1936, the Trust's wider reach and modern identity were emerging. In 1935, the Trust held a competition and selected a new 'emblem', or logo, to place on its signs to make it easier for the public to recognise Trust properties.[43] The 'now familiar omega oakleaf symbol' was designed by Joseph Armitage and replaced 'the unsightly noticeboards with their lists of bylaws' which had previously marked Trust-owned land.[44] David Gentleman, who also designed a series of posters for the Trust in the 1970s, redesigned the symbol in 1980 and his simplified design remains in use today. The oak leaf was selected over Eric Gill's lion design in 1935 because it was 'a less commonly used symbol and easier to reproduce'.[45] Both would have been traditional symbols linked to royalty, and oak trees have a long affiliation with ideas of English and British identity. The Royal Oak, the tree which Charles II used to hide from the Roundheads in 1651, is the namesake of the American Royal Oak Foundation, created in the 1970s to support the Trust through fundraising. Its own logo is the National Trust's oak leaf symbol with a crown above it.

The 1985 Treasure Houses Exhibition held in Washington was partly used to garner publicity for the Trust in the US and increase support and funding through the Royal Oak Foundation.[46] In connection with the Exhibition, the Trust's Architectural Adviser Gervase Jackson-Stops acted as guest curator and was seconded to the National Gallery of Art for two-and-a-half years. Between 1976 and 1978 the Merrill Trust also paid for restoration work of 'show rooms' and the

[42] National Trust Report and Accounts 1975, (London: Design for Print Ltd., 1975), 10.
[43] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1934-1935, (London: National Trust, 1935), 5.
[44] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 115.
[45] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 115.
[46] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Annual Report 1985, (Richard Clay [The Chaucer Press] Ltd, 1986), 23.

acquisition of more collection items at Hanbury Hall.[47] Although the Trust continued to take on country houses in the 1970s and 1980s, it was at a slower rate than in the immediate years after the War. There were still those in the Trust 'to whom stately homes are sacred objects' by the 1980s, as seen in the success of the blockbuster Treasure Houses exhibition, though their views carried less weight by the Trust's centenary in 1995.[48] The exhibition represented the country house as the height of civilisation and, as Patrick Wright highlights, placed weight on the authenticity of the European big house over a museum in the New World.[49] The Royal Oak Foundation continues to raise money for the National Trust today and in 2021 it donated £3 million.

The National Trust Around the World: Ireland, Australia, and Jamaica

The National Trust was the first of many national trust organisations to develop globally. The International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) has 91 member organisations from over sixty nations and territories across the world.[50] Some of these are only connected to the National Trust by the type of work they do, but some were directly inspired by it, or founded under British rule, as detailed below. Today, the National Trust owns property in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. In its early years it also had properties in Ireland, before these were transferred to Ireland's National Trust, *An Taisce,* which was founded in 1948. Scotland has its own separate body, the *National Trust for Scotland*, founded in 1931. In 1936, a Regional Committee for Northern Ireland had been set up in Ulster, and in 1943 the Northern Ireland Committee proposed that it should have more autonomy, which the National Trust decided against, while acknowledging that if the Committee wanted to become an entirely independent body under a distinctive name, the Trust would not object. In the same year, the Merioneth County Council proposed a separate Welsh national trust could be set up, but at that time a lack of money and an

[47] Lees-Milne, *People and Places*, 68.
[48] Cannadine, 'The First Hundred Years,' 26.
[49] Wright, *A Journey Through Ruins*, 96.
[50] 'Our Members,' *The International National Trusts Organisation,* website, accessed 9 February 2022, https://www.into.org/who-we-are/our-members/.

insufficiently sized membership to warrant it, but a special branch with an Advisory Committee for Wales was set up in 1945.[51] Since 1951, the Isle of Man has had the Manx Museum and National Trust, *Manx National Heritage*, and the National Trusts for Jersey and Guernsey were founded in 1937 and 1960 respectively. Three examples of national trusts which were founded with varying amount of influence from the National Trust are the Australian, Irish, and Jamaican National Trusts.

In 1956, the National Trust's Council expressed that it was glad that the National Trusts of South Australia and New Zealand had been incorporated and sent them good wishes.[52] The National Trust for Australia was directly inspired by the English example. The Australian National Trust movement began in New South Wales, led by Annie Wyatt, who was motivated by the loss of Burdekin House and the Commissariat Stores in Sydney in the 1930s and 1940s, as well as her enthusiasm for Australia's colonial history.[53] In contrast, Margaret Feilman, who drove the creation of the National Trust of Western Australia, was prompted by her Australian national identity, having found the imperial worldviews and racism she witnessed when she went to England in 1950 offensive.[54] Offices opened in different Australian states throughout the 1950s-1970s and now the Australian National Trust consists of eight regional bodies, led by the central Australian Council of National Trusts. In the 1970s, the National Trust hosted a party of members of the National Trust for New South Wales at the Blewcoat School in London during their three-week tour of Britain. The Trust reported that it was 'pleased that the National Trust's ideas and aims have penetrated so many other parts of the world'.[55]

In contrast, the creation of a National Trust in Jamaica was led by an Englishman. Angus Acworth, a founding member of the Georgian Group, a preservation group formed in 1937 out of the SPAB,

[51] Fedden, *The Continuing Purpose,* 36-7.
[52] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1955-56, 33.
[53] Ivor Wyatt, *Ours in Trust: A Personal History of The National Trust of Australia* (NSW), (Sydney: Willow Bend Press, 1987), 2, 8.
[54] Andrea Witcomb and Kate Gregory, *From the Barracks to the Burrup: The National Trust in Western Australia*, (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd., 2010), 52.
[55] The National Trust Report and Accounts 1978, (London: Cox & Wyman Ltd., 1978), 23.

was instrumental in the preservation of historic buildings in Jamaica in the mid-twentieth century. In 1946, the British Council and the Jamaican Historical Association invited Acworth to visit Jamaica. The trip was expanded to include other British colonies in the Caribbean when Colonial Development and Welfare funds were given to Acworth as a grant to contribute to his expenses. Acworth wrote a Report for the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1951 summarising his findings about the islands' historic architecture and the Jamaican Government set up the National Trust Commission in 1959, largely based on Acworth's recommendations.[56] Acworth was a supporter of the National Trust and gave 33 Kensington Square in London to it in 1952. Headquarters House, which is the head office of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust, was built in 1755 as the residence of Thomas Hibbert, an English plantation owner and merchant who was speaker of the Jamaican House of Assembly.[57]

In 1900, the National Trust acquired Kanturk Castle, its first property in Ireland, in County Cork. From this time until Ireland became a Republic, the Trust owned properties there. The Castle was described by the Trust as 'a curious relic' which was never inhabited:

> 'A fortified manor house rather than a castle, it was raised by a savage chieftain named Donough McCarthy, of whom tradition says that he stopped all wayfarers and compelled them to labour at his castle.'[58]

Originally, the Castle was built, though never completed, for MacDonogh MacCarthy, Lord of Duhallow, to defend the area from English settlement in the early seventeenth century. The Trust's retelling distances the Castle from its historic purpose as a defence against English invasion while describing MacCarthy as a 'savage chieftain', a trope implying that the Irish were uncivilised. It is significant that the National Trust was presenting this history in this way while it was promoting

[56] Acworth's book, *Treasure in the Caribbean* (1949), contains most of the same information as the Report.
[57] For a history of the Hibberts family and their influence in Jamaica and England, see Katie Donington, *The Bonds of Family: Slavery, Commerce and Culture in the British Atlantic World,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).
[58] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report for the Year 1899-1900, 7-8.

a sense of shared history across the Empire. When Ireland became a Republic in 1948 it founded An Taisce, and in 1951 was granted a thousand-year lease for Kanturk Castle.[59] In 2000, legislation was changed meaning that Kanturk was officially transferred to Irish President McAleese on behalf of An Taisce.

At the same time that the National Trust was working to preserve historic sites, Robert Hunter was drafting preservation legislation, such as an amendment to the Ancient Monuments Act, the Land Dedication Bill, and the Places of Natural, Scientific, or Historic Interest Bill.[60] The 1892 Ancient Monuments Act in Ireland meant that the Irish Commissioners of Works could already accept the guardianship of ancient or medieval structures when requested by the owner, so long as they believed that a historic, traditional, or artistic interest made it a matter of public interest. The Trust described the Bill's purpose as being to assimilate the law in Great Britain and Ireland regarding historic monuments, as at that time British county councils outside of London could not accept the guardianship of a historic monument as they could in Ireland.[61] As a result of the Act of the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, there was explicit provision for the preservation of churches that were disused or ruined in Ireland, whereas in England the Church remained responsible for the conservation of its property. Hunter had written about the Irish legislation in 1898 and argued that there was no imaginable reason to preserve Irish national monuments and not British ones. While he conceded that the Irish Church provided funding for the repair and maintenance of medieval remains in Ireland, Hunter joked that it could 'hardly be suggested that the preservation of mediaeval remains in this island should be postponed till the disestablishment of the Churches of England and Scotland'.[62] The Trust held influence in the creation of legislation for Ireland while preserving its historic monuments and presenting its histories.

[59] Lydia Greeves, *Houses of the National Trust*, (London: National Trust Books, 2013), 8.
[60] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report for the Year 1898-1899, (London: National Trust, 1899), 16-17.
[61] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report for the Year 1899-1900, 12.
[62] Robert Hunter, 'Places and Things of Interest and Natural Beauty,' *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, 43:254 (1898), 570-589, 587.

The National Trust in Jamaica was created by the British colonial government towards the end of its rule, and the buildings which Acworth was interested in were primarily those built for plantation owners and colonial administrators in the eighteenth century. Acworth continued to be engaged with preservation in the Caribbean for years afterwards, both through the Jamaican National Trust and in debates about the creation of a centralised archive for the islands. Writing in 1962, Acworth suggested that basing the archive in Jamaica would 'not find favour with the other islands' and would be received badly now that it had withdrawn from the West Indian Federation.[63] In another letter, the Governor of Jamaica wrote to Acworth to tell him that nobody could get on with 'normal work' and help him with his enquiries in the lead up to Independence Day, reflecting, as the Irish and Australian examples do, the transition of British preservationists into preserving relics of what was becoming an imperial past.[64]

In Australia there was a tension, like that experienced in England when the National Trust was founded, between the rapid development of technology and industry that sustained urbanisation and the appeal of a romantic, rural past. The creation of the National Trust of Western Australia occurred about sixty years after the National Trust, when Perth experienced huge population growth after WWII and its architecture was changing rapidly.[65] The national trust movement in Western Australia centred on Perth's historic buildings, most prominently St George's Terrace, as well as its Arcadian appearance from a distance, which tied into British visions of the picturesque.[66] In the Australian context, industrial development was largely linked to white European settlement, often understood patriotically as the positive progress of colonisation and welcomed 'as an extension of the pioneer mythology' until the 1950s when increasing numbers

[63] Letter from Angus Acworth to C.W.W. Greenidge, 26 February 1962, Bodleian Weston Library, Oxford, MSS.W.Ind.s.70, Box 2, File 2: 'Correspondence Relating to the Provision of Archive Services in the West Indies, 1948-1962'.
[64] Letter from Kenneth Blackburne to Angus Acworth, 23 June 1962, Bodleian Weston Library, Oxford, MSS.W.Ind.s.70, Box 2, File 3: 'Correspondence Regarding the Jamaican National Trust Committee, 1951-1962 and the Old Naval Hospital at Port Royal, Jamaica, 1961-1965'.
[65] Witcomb and Gregory, *From the Barracks to the Burrup,* 30-31.
[66] Witcomb and Gregory, *From the Barracks to the Burrup,* 27.

of people began to think that the 'rate of change was too fast'.[67] Today, the Australian National Trust describes its bodies roles as 'independent community bodies that promote conservation of and access to Australia's unique natural, cultural and Indigenous heritage'.[68] Andrea Witcomb and Kate Gregory emphasise that while the Australian Trust was often led by upper-class interests, the wider heritage movement in Western Australia was a grassroots-led one and that balancing these interests was one of the key difficulties for the early National Trust for Western Australia.[69]

In the nineteenth century, 'there was virtually no architectural exchange between England and Ireland…beyond the imposition of English country-house styles on Irish estates'.[70] In the National Trust's Annual Report for 1899-1900, it explained that the Muckross Estate, which includes parts of the Lakes of Killarney, was for sale and individuals in England and the US had become concerned about whether a new owner would keep the estate open for the public to visit as it had been under the ownership of the Herbert family.[71] The Marquis of Dufferin and James Bryce motioned a resolution at the Trust's Annual General Meeting, which was adopted unanimously, to try and acquire and preserve the property along the lines which the US and Canada had the Niagara Falls.[72] The Trust set up a Committee with the Lord Mayor of Dublin, the Earl of Mayo, but could not afford to purchase it. Hunter visited Killarney and wrote a report listing properties within the Estate that the Trust could potentially purchase from the new owner to maintain public access, but when the Trust learned that he was Lord Ardilaun it stopped pursuing action, 'feeling sure that the well-known generosity of the Guinness family was sufficient guarantee that the public enjoyment of the beauties of Killarney would in no way be curtailed'.[73] In the Irish context, this earlier example of prominent Protestant families taking on the role of maintaining monuments and managing public access to them takes on a different significance. During the Irish

[67] Witcomb and Gregory, *From the Barracks to the Burrup,* 27.
[68] 'About Us,' *National Trust of Australia*, [webpage], https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/about-us/, accessed 4 April 2022.
[69] Witcomb and Gregory, *From the Barracks to the Burrup,* 27.
[70] Stephanie Barczewski, *How the Country House Became English*, 250.
[71] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report for the Year 1898-1899, 12-4.
[72] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report for the Year 1898-1899, 13.
[73] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report for the Year 1898-1899, 12-4.

War of Independence, many of Ireland's big houses were burned and those which are maintained as heritage sites today are understood very differently from those in England, their contested histories being more explicitly engaged with.[74] In 1953 the National Trust accepted Derrymore in County Armagh as a gift, which was once the home of Isaac Corry, who helped to draft the Act of Union of 1801; in the 1970s it was closed to visitors after bombs were planted there during The Troubles, before reopening in the 1980s.

The Irish and Jamaican examples illustrate the changing parameters of British heritage the Trust was operating within and helping to define at different moments in its history. The National Trust's definition of national heritage bent and flexed in ways that often took the imperial context for granted. However, international connections to British and English heritage were made more explicit when the Trust collaborated with American colleagues.

Putting Up Statues of Each Other

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the Trust was engaged in the celebration of individuals and events chosen to represent American history and its origins in Britain. Historic sites connected with Shakespeare were a popular choice among Transatlantic preservationists. Hall argues that Stratford-upon-Avon 'formed part of a visual and experiential narrative of associated sites of the "motherland" of the English-speaking empire'.[75] Perhaps playing on the fears about Americans buying up British collections referenced earlier, but also reflecting admiration for US preservationists among the Trust's founders, Canon Rawnsley suggested that Americans cared 'more for this England than we do ourselves' in 1899, noting that Americans valued sites related to Shakespeare as part of their own heritage and criticised their poor

[74] See James S. Donnelly Jr., 'Big House Burnings in County Cork during the Irish Revolution, 1920-21,' *Éire-Ireland,* 47:3 (2012), 141-197; Terrance Dooley, *Burning the Big House: The Story of the Irish Country House in a Time of War and Revolution,* (Yale University Press, 2022).

[75] Melanie Hall, 'Plunder or Preservation? Negotiating an Anglo-American Heritage in the Later Nineteenth Century in the Old World and the New: Shakespeare's Birthplace, Niagara Falls, and Carlyle's House,' in Astrid Swenson and Peter Mandler (Eds.), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire, c. 1800-1940,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 241.

preservation in England.[76] This attachment continued into the mid-twentieth century, when James Lees-Milne, the National Trust's Secretary, recalled that Americans were 'considered suckers for any sort of Shakespeare venture'.[77] In 1950 the Trust acquired Lamb House, in Rye, from the American novelist Henry James' nephew's widow. James had lived at Lamb House between 1899 and 1916, and the house itself dates from the eighteenth century. According to John Gaze, the Trust was happy to accept the property on architectural grounds and saw the association with James in the context of the Transatlantic "special relationship" as a 'bonus', and the property was transferred to the Trust as 'an enduring symbol of the ties that unite the British and American peoples'.[78]

Runnymede, the site where the Magna Carta was signed by King John in 1215, was acquired by the National Trust in 1931. As Jill Lepore explains, Magna Carta has gained symbolic significance over time, particularly in the US, which outgrows its actual historical impact.[79] In the early twentieth century, William T. Stead, the prominent newspaper editor and proponent of Anglo-American 'racial union', and Walter Besant, author and treasurer of the Atlantic Union, debated the possibility of an annual date 'to celebrate racial unity' between Britain and the US and chose the anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta.[80] The land was purchased in 1929 by American heiress Lady Fairhaven and her sons, who commissioned Sir Edwin Lutyens, the influential British architect who was instrumental in designing New Delhi, to design a set of 'two kiosks' in memory of her husband on the site, now home to the Magna Carta tea room.[81] The land at Runnymede had previously belonged to the Crown and following a controversy in 1921 when the

[76] Canon H. D. Rawnsley, 'The National Trust: Its Aims and Its Work,' *Saint George*, 7:II (1899), 117-127, 113.
[77] James Lees-Milne, *People and Places,* 130.
[78] John Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape,* 164.
[79] Jill Lepore, 'The Rule of History: Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, and the Hold of Time,' *The New Yorker*, 20 April 2015, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/04/20/the-rule-of-history, accessed 4 October 2022.
[80] Duncan Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America,* (Princeton University Press, 2020), 101, 297-8; Joseph O. Baylen, 'Stead, William Thomas (1849-1912), Newspaper Editor and Spiritualist,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edition), 23 September 2004, Oxford University Press https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-36258, accessed 15 October 2022.
[81] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1930-1931, (London: National Trust, 1931), 15.

Government attempted to sell the site by auction, the decision was made to sell the land 'only with a view to its preservation'.[82] When the Trust took over the site in the 1930s, it appointed a local committee chaired by Lord FitzAlan, the last Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.[83]

When the National Trust acquired Runnymede*, The Times* praised the site as a perfect fit for the charity's mission, suggesting that 'in few places can both claims be so well fulfilled as this.'[84] Newspapers in the US joined in the coverage of Runnymede being 'saved for the nation'.[85] *The Times* described Magna Carta as one of 'the cardinal points of English liberty; and the spot which witnessed them is dear not only to English people but also to all whose forefathers shared the benefits there won' and over time, Runnymede has become the site of various international monuments.[86] In 1957, the American Bar Association had the Magna Carta Memorial commissioned, a neoclassical-style pavilion. In 1964, a memorial to President Kennedy at Runnymede was announced, using money raised by the British public and Government to fund scholarships and the building of the memorial. The memorial, designed by Geoffrey Jellicoe, was intended not to 'be a monument in the classical sense', and is carved from a large piece of Portland Stone set within three acres of meadowland presented to the United States by the Queen.[87]

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[82] 'Runnymede Safe for All Time,' *Daily Telegraph*, 19 December 1929, 12, The Telegraph Historical Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/IO0707594595/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=ea59a1fa, accessed 21 March 2022.

[83] 'Runnymede,' *The Times*, 16 May 1930, 16, The Times Digital Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/CS269296304/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=c8b83703, accessed 21 March 2022.

[84] 'Runnymede for the Nation,' *The Times*, 18 December 1929, 15, The Times Digital Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/ CS252125586/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=5228232d, accessed 21 March 2022.

[85] 'Runnymede's Future,' *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*, 13 August 1929, 8, Daily Mail Historical Archive, link.gale.com/ apps/doc/EE1861798316/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=2f653837, accessed 21 March 2022; 'Runnymede to be Saved,' *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*, 8 November 1929, 5, Daily Mail Historical Archive, link.gale.com/ apps/doc/EE1861935149/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=3902fb90, accessed 21 March 2022; 'Magna Carta Site,' *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition,* 19 December 1929, 8, Daily Mail Historical Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/ EE1861976163/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=0a48471d, accessed 21 March 2022.

[86] 'Runnymede for the Nation,' *The Times*, 18 December 1929, 15, The Times Digital Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/ CS252125586/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmark-GDCS&xid=5228232d, accessed 21 March 2022.

[87] 'On This Day: Runnymede Memorial to President Kennedy,' *The Times,* 23 November 2002, 44, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/on-this-day-the-times-november-23-1964-fmqwjsd52nh, accessed 12 October 2022. The meadowland was designed to guide visitors through a journey resembling The Pilgrim's Progress. For more details of the Memorial and its symbolism, see: Michael Spens, *The Complete Landscape Designs and Gardens of Geoffrey Jellicoe,* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994).

Figures like Lincoln and Washington were remade as transnational heroes at moments when it was advantageous to do so, and the preservation of historic sites connected to them was an effective way of cementing positive Transatlantic ties.[88] A quarter-acre of land near Swanton Morley, Norfolk, was gifted to the Trust by Colonel John Leslie in 1943 due to its association with Abraham Lincoln's ancestors, where the Trust suggested there should be a monument to the former American President.[89] The quarter-acre of land was presented to the Trust along with covenants over an adjacent four acres, which included 'what remains of the house which belonged to the ancestors of Abraham Lincoln'.[90] Earlier commemorations included an exchange of large pieces of granite between the residents of Hingham, Norfolk, and New Hingham, Massachusetts, in 1911 and a statue of Lincoln outside Parliament Square in London, unveiled in 1920.[91] Washington Old Hall is the former family seat of George Washington's ancestors and in 1936 was condemned, having been most recently used as a tenement for nine families. The Washington Old Hall Preservation Committee was established and prevented its demolition: the thirteenth-century Hall was presented to the Trust in 1957. The American Ambassador, Winthrop Aldrich, opened the Hall in 1955, and two years later the National Trust acquired the property without an endowment 'in view of its historical importance to both England and America'.[92] Edwin Saint recalls historic pageants held at the Hall when he was a child, arranged 'to foster good relations between America and the UK' by Fred Hill, who was key in instigating its preservation.[93]

Various individuals contributed to the preservation of Washington Hall and added items and features to it, often as memorials to individuals connected in some way to the fostering of

[88] Edwards, '"From Here Lincoln Came",' 22-46.
[89] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1943-4, (London: National Trust, 1944), 17.
[90] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1944-1945, (Letchworth: The Garden City Press Ltd., 1945), 30.
[91] Edwards, '"From Here Lincoln Came": Anglo-Saxonism, The Special Relationship, and the Anglicisation of Abraham Lincoln, c. 1860-1970,' *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 11, no. 1 (2013), 22-46, 33.
[92] National Trust guidebook, 'Washington Old Hall,' 3, (undated), 728WAS, John Cornforth Collection, Paul Mellon Centre, London. (Hereafter shortened to: 'Washington Old Hall,' 728WAS, John Cornforth Collection).
[93] National Trust, 'Edwin Saint WHO 60,' Youtube video, 4 October 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVqydyccbZw&ab_channel=NationalTrustintheNorthofEngland, accessed 14 October 2022.

Transatlantic goodwill. Charles Sumner Bird - a nominated member of the English National Trust (nominated by the Trustees of Public Reservations of Massachusetts) and a Trustee of the NTHP - funded the restoration of the caretaker's lodge and donated two busts of George Washington.[94] Miss Mabel Choate, whose father Joseph Hodges Choate was American Ambassador to the United Kingdom 1899-1905, paid for furnishings, panelling, and a rose garden as memorials to her father and to Eric Underwood, 'who did so much to promote Anglo-American relationships'.[95] Harris Masterson, a philanthropist from Houston, Texas, was a supporter of the preservation of the Hall and gave a mid-seventeenth-century stumpwork cabinet.[96] Chapter XI of the Colonial Dames of America provided a set of eighteenth-century gates to the Hall.[97] In 1972, American Ambassador Walter Annenberg gifted a stone sundial which was put in the garden of Washington Old Hall.[98] In 1975, to mark the Bicentenary of the American Revolution, a twenty-one-year titular lease of Washington Old Hall was presented by Lord Antrim, Chairman of the National Trust, to the Chairman of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration.[99] Two years later, President Jimmy Carter visited with Prime Minister Callaghan. Carter was given Life Membership of the National Trust and Royal Oak Foundation, and gifted an autographed picture of Mount Vernon, former home of George Washington, to be hung in Washington Hall.[100] The visit was televised, encouraging Americans to donate to an appeal for the Hall's endowment and saw a 70% increase in Royal Oak membership.

The Williamsburg Award given to Churchill in 1955 – which took the form of a silver bell modelled on the colonial-era Williamsburg town crier's - was framed as a celebration of the values of

[94] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1949-50, 26; Correspondence from Charles Sumner Bird to Jack Rathbone, 27 Feb 1956, 9162, NT Archive; National Trust guidebook, 'Washington Old Hall,' 728WAS, John Cornforth Collection, 9-13.
[95] 'Washington Old Hall,' 728WAS, 9.
[96] 'Washington Old Hall,' 728WAS, 13.
[97] 'Washington Old Hall,' 728WAS, 9.
[98] 'Washington Old Hall,' 728WAS, 9.
[99] The National Trust Report and Accounts 1975, 10.
[100] National Trust Reports and Accounts 1977, (London: Alabaster & Son Ltd., 1977), 10-11.

'liberty' and 'justice' and of Williamsburg as the 'cradle of America's democracy'.[101] A description of the Award states that 'recipients may be natives of any land, reside in any country, work at any occupation, be members of any race', reflecting the Transatlantic rhetoric of the post-War era.[102] A *New York Times* article covering the 1955 award ceremony compared Churchill to the 'great spirits' of George Washington, George Whyte, and other famous American revolutionaries from Williamsburg.[103] The article stressed that:

> 'In its heyday Williamsburg did not owe its importance to its architecture or its landscape or its interior decorations, and it would never have been restored in our time for these alone. Its significance arose from its *public* character; its enduring meaning lies in the deeds and ideas that are associated with it, and in the wonderful public men it nurtured. Now that the setting has been so beautifully restored, we should continually re-create the plays and recall the players.'[104]

The author draws out the connection between Churchill and his predecessors as the "great men" of history, a form of monumentalisation in which Churchill took part himself; in his acceptance speech, Churchill joked about his own American ancestry.[105]

James Bryce's work fostering the Trust's links with leading preservationists in Boston and specifically with Harvard University through his friend Charles W. Eliot, President of Harvard, re-oriented 'Britain's popular perception away from the American War of Independence to the common colonial past'.[106] In 1911, William Stead approached James Bryce in his role as British

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[101] 'Churchill Williamsburg Award 1955,' *British Pathé,* https://www.britishpathe.com/video/churchill-williamsburg-award, accessed 10 October 2022.
[102] 'The Williamsburg Award', 9161, 'Colonial Williamsburg: Relationship,' National Trust Archive. The award has been given to one other recipient than Churchill, Anthony Kennedy (Associate Justice of the Supreme Court from 1988 to 2018).
[103] Dumas Malone, 'The Williamsburg Spirit Lives On,' *New York Times*, 4 December 1955, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1955/12/04/93813252.html?pageNumber=315, New York Times TimesMachine, accessed 22 February 2022.
[104] Malone, 'The Williamsburg Spirit Lives On,' 26, [emphasis original].
[105] 'Churchill Williamsburg Award 1955,' *British Pathé*.
[106] Hall, 'The Politics of Collecting,' 353.

Ambassador to suggest a monument to George Washington be constructed in London as 'an admirable means of propagandism for the English-speaking world idea'.[107] A statue of Washington placed at Trafalgar Square in 1921 drew on the association between him and country life, portraying him holding a walking cane with a plough behind him 'signifying the life of pastoral tranquillity' at Mount Vernon.[108] In his own lifetime, George Washington sought to emulate the English country gentleman and his position as 'a Virginian planter rather than a New England radical' meant that he appealed to influential landowners in Britain.[109] After an extended debate about where the statue of Washington should be placed, Lord Curzon received the monument on behalf of the British public, referring to Washington as an Englishman and suggesting that the statue demonstrated that 'the two great branches of the English-speaking race were now indissolubly one'.[110]

At this time, Curzon was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and was clearly invested in the sort of diplomacy being discussed here, understanding historic preservation as part of international politics.[111] After Curzon returned to England, he continued working on acquisitions for the Victoria Memorial, including his successful campaign for the statue of Clive to be erected outside Gwynder House in Whitehall and a copy of it placed at the VMH. Curzon chaired the Clive Memorial Committee. The 1907 statue of Clive stands in a similar pose to Washington, holding a sword instead of a cane. Clive offers an alternative example to Washington of someone fashioning themselves as an English country gentleman, having bought Claremont Estate in Surrey (owned by the National Trust since 1949) and commissioned Capability Brown to build the Palladian Mansion which stands there today. This forms part of a wider pattern of East India Company officials using their wealth to buy country houses, often working 'sedulously to erase or obscure the provenance of their wealth' in the same vein that families involved in the Transatlantic Slave

[107] Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race*, 299.
[108] Edwards '"A Great Englishman",' 167.
[109] Edwards '"A Great Englishman",' 164.
[110] Edwards '"A Great Englishman", 172.
[111] Edwards '"A Great Englishman",' 179; Peter Yearwood, '"A Genuine and Energetic League of Nations Policy": Lord Curzon and the New Diplomacy, 1918-1925,' *Diplomacy & Statecraft,* 21, no. 2, (2010), 159-174.

Trade did.[112] In Chapter Five, this theme is picked up again, linking the preservation of the English country house to the American plantation house.

Conclusion

The National Trust's correspondence with colleagues in the United States demonstrates that it continued to be engaged with 'memory diplomacy' from its founding in the 1890s to the 1950s. Sam Edwards and Melanie Hall have established the Trust's involvement in the construction of Anglo-American heritage in this period, and this Chapter has contributed further evidence of this trend and its continuation into the middle of the twentieth century. Moreover, I have linked this to the wider preservation of imperial history. Documenting this aspect of the Trust's history is an essential part of any understanding of the historic narratives it has come to tell through its properties. The putting up of statues of men who had lived hundreds of years before was inextricably linked to the historicization of contemporary figures, such as Churchill, through honours like the Williamsburg Award. To construct a coherent, celebratory vision of Transatlantic history, events were rewritten, whether by whitewashing the realities of enslavement and colonialism or by construing the American Revolution as a victory of English spirit and democracy against a German King.[113] While preserving historic sites connected to the US was not central to the Trust's work, it was clearly considered to be important both culturally and as a way of attracting international visitors and funding. The correspondence quoted above demonstrates that the Trust saw itself as having a role in supporting the political friendship of Britain and the US through its relationship with the NTHP. Moreover, various individuals and groups it collaborated with to preserve sites such as Washington Old Hall and Runnymede explicitly grounded this relationship in terms of a shared identity. The following chapter mostly focuses on the changing image of the English country house but with attention to the Transatlantic context which has been provided here. It also highlights the importance placed on families maintaining

[112] Margot Finn and Kate Smith, 'Introduction,' in (eds.) Margot Finn and Kate Smith, *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857,* (London: UCL Press, 2018), 8-9.
[113] Edwards '"A Great Englishman",' 166.

their ancestral ties to their country estates. In the same way that Churchill and others were being historicised in real-time, so were the owners of country houses, who became part of the historic appeal of the house, creating an argument for preserving them alongside the houses.

Chapter 5 Petrifying the Country House

Writing in the 1990s, Paula Weideger suggested that 'from its beginnings, the National Trust seems to have been involved in stopping the clock'.[1] The Country Houses Scheme perhaps most obviously attempted to stop history in its tracks, or more accurately to change its course. The drive to preserve the country house was a response to its decline. Arguments which were made for keeping landed families in residence once they had transferred ownership to the National Trust felt mismatched with the country house's new status as a heritage site. This shaped the ways that the Trust presented the histories of the houses, particularly through its emphasis on art collections and design. The publicly displayed rooms were intended to look lived in but were to be looked at rather than used by visitors. The image of the country house as being 'frozen-in-time…in which the evolution of family life has suddenly stopped' continues to endure.[2] In 2021, Merlin Waterson stated that the presentation of the houses changed very little over time partly because the Trust did not have the resources or expertise to, and out of politeness towards the donors and their families: 'one wouldn't want to write things or present things in a way that they might think was tactless'.[3]

From the 1930s, the Trust emphasised that it did not want the houses to become empty displays, and most of all it did not intend for them to become museums, though it seems unclear what they would be instead. As part of the Country Houses Scheme (and the wider transformation of the country house into a modern heritage site), the idea of the country house as an essential part of national heritage was constructed. This process aestheticized the country house, and the simultaneous transformation of plantation houses in the United States also saw them aestheticized in ways that whitewashed their histories. In Chapter Two, I provided an outline of the creation of the Country Houses Scheme. In this chapter, I explore the ways the Scheme

[1] Weideger, *Gilding the Acorn,* 36.
[2] Aslet, *The Story of the Country House,* 14.
[3] Knight, 'Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History'.

influenced how country houses are seen in greater detail. Firstly, I consider the arguments which were put forward between the 1930s and 1950s to justify the former owners and their descendants remaining in residence when the Trust took ownership of their country houses. The second section explores the parallels between country house preservation in Britain and plantation house preservation in the United States. In the final section, I argue that in turning the country house into something defined almost entirely by its appearance, the Trust made some aspects of their histories harder to see.

Making the Case for the Country House as a Home

The transfer of Wallington, a country estate in Northumberland, to the National Trust in 1942 encompasses many of the contradictions and ultimate outcomes of the Country Houses Scheme. In the hall, paintings by the Pre-Raphaelite artist William Bell Scott, commissioned by Sir Walter Trevelyan in 1856, tell the history of Northumberland. The final painting in the series, *Iron and Coal*, illustrates the industry through which the family's fortune had been made, contrasting with its countryside surroundings. The hammer and sickle Charles Trevelyan painted on the gates at Wallington might have looked similarly incongruous. Trevelyan was one of the first country house owners to give up ownership of his home in this way, having first suggested that he would give it to the National Trust in 1934, which acted as 'a spur to the Country Houses Scheme'.[4] His brother, G.M. Trevelyan, was also chairman of the National Trust's Estates Committee from 1928 and later the vice-chairman of its Executive Committee.[5] Trevelyan framed his decision in terms of public benefit. In 1942, he stated in a notice to the press that he felt that houses such as his should be owned by the community, putting a 'gloss on his motives'.[6] Weideger emphasises the disconnect between the public narrative of what was happening and the reality:

[4] Waterson, *The National Trust*, 120.
[5] Professor Treveylan's brother, Charles, was the first to transfer ownership of his country house under the Trust's Scheme. Lady Trevelyan, Charles' wife, was a Trust's Executive Committee member.
[6] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 93.

> 'In *The Times* of 1 November 1941, beneath a large photograph of the mansion house attractively framed by leafy trees was the announcement...But it was seventeen years before the National Trust took charge of Wallington.'[7]

The mechanism which enabled Trevelyan to remain in control of Wallington was the use of a Memorandum of Wishes. The Memorandum protected 'the donor's tax position, and the Trust's charitable status,' while allowing the former to guide the Trust's management of their former home.[8] Although these wishes are presented in a legal framework, they are not binding and are intended to be used as recommendations and guidance. Trevelyan, who introduced this practice at the Trust, continued to manage Wallington with a life interest meaning he remained a tenant.

The use of the Memorandum offered a way of attracting country house owners to the idea of transferring their homes to the Trust by ensuring that the houses would remain under their influence. Similar dynamics around family influence over National Trust property were seen in earlier examples. Local committees were often set up to manage newly acquired properties. When Box Hill was bought and donated by Leopold Salomons, a financier, the management committee was constituted with Salomons as its Chairman and 'in terms which subsequently led the members to consider themselves virtually independent of the National Trust'.[9] Lord Curzon's will stated that a member of his family should sit on the local committee for Bodiam Castle, when it came to the Trust on his death in 1925.[10] In the 1940s, Lady Curzon was living at Bodiam Manor, a house on the estate, and debates about opening times at the Castle still centred on Curzon's will.[11]

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[7] Weideger, *Guilding the Acorn,* 59.
[8] Waterson, *The National Trust*, 121.
[9] Gaze, *Figures in a Landscape,* 52.
[10] Correspondence from Joan Whistler, 8 June 1946, 'Bodiam Castle General Correspondence, 1946-1949,' Unique ID 2081, National Trust Archive.
[11] Letter from Deputy Chief Agent to E. R. Burder, 19 February 1946, 'Bodiam Castle General Correspondence, 1946-1949,' Unique ID 2081, National Trust Archive.

When the Country Houses Scheme was coming to fruition in the 1930s, there was no agreed sense among the public or landlords that country houses formed an integral part of national history or identity, but country houses were transformed over the next few decades from 'a private home into a public symbol'.[12] In 1921, Lord Beauchamp produced a report about the extension of the Ancient Monuments Acts. Writing about country houses, he suggested that the State should recognise their 'service'. Beauchamp proposed that the government should provide 'tax reliefs and maintenance grants for historic houses in return for an extension of preservationist control' with limitations placed on the owner's free use of the property, but Lord Crawford, First Commissioner of Works and later Chairman of the National Trust, buried the report, not yet being willing to encroach on private property rights.[13] It was really aesthetes, architects, and planners who became concerned about protecting country houses from ruin, accompanied by a minority of landowners, that created the argument for their historic significance that would attract greater public support.

From the 1930s, *Country Life,* and Christopher Hussey in his role as Editor, presented landlords as trustees or stewards who were now being forced not to look after their houses as intended because of their own relative political and economic precarity. Landowners emphasised that 'country houses had "always" been open to the public' and that 'their owners were "public benefactors" who deserved praise and support'.[14] Adrian Tinniswood suggests that:

> 'As we get out of the car on a Sunday afternoon…; as we buy our guide-book and postcards; as we sit in the tea-room and eat our cake and chat about what interested us most, it is easy to forget that we are heirs to a great tradition which stretches back across centuries.'[15]

[12] Peter Mandler, 'Nationalising the Country House,' in Michael Hunter (ed.), *Preserving the Past: The Rise of Heritage in Modern Britian*, (Stroud: Akab Sutton, 1996), 99.
[13] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 240.
[14] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 293.
[15] Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting*, 2.

Yet David Cannadine has argued that it is misleading to try and 'establish an illusory continuity between country-house viewing of old, and today's stately-homes business'.[16] In 1945, *County Life* published 'The Future of Great Country Houses', a series of four articles written by country house owners making the case for the protection of country houses by appealing to 'an apparently hostile government' and showing themselves to be 'massively sensitive to criticisms of privilege and inherited wealth', presumably heightened by the context of the War.[17] Many stately homes had been requisitioned by the government and used as hospitals, housing, and army bases during the war. In some cases, this saw extensive damage to the houses. These developments perhaps contributed to a shift in public perception, as this was the first time the country house had been used as a public resource on such a large scale. After the War, growing numbers of owners were turning to the National Trust as a way out of unaffordable maintenance. However, the contributors to the *Country Life* series – H.D. Walston, Christopher Hussey, Lord Methuen, and the Marchioness of Exeter – all 'saw the future very much in terms of seeking ways to enable owners to continue to maintain their country houses as private homes'.[18]

Hussey argued that the châteaux and schlosses of Europe were 'dead shells' because they were no longer lived in; England's great houses were superior because their history was ongoing.[19] Lord Lothian echoed Hussey, claiming:

> 'Nothing is more melancholy than to visit these ancient houses after they have been turned into public museums, swept, garnished, dead, lifeless shells, containing no children's voices, none of the hopes and sorrows of family life, no procession of guests meeting to discuss politics or economics, literature or art, or the varied problems of

[16] Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy,* 695.
[17] Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting*, 171.
[18] Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting*, 172.
[19] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 290.

> contemporary life, nothing but a procession of what the Americans appositely call rubber-neck tourists and a few bored guides mumbling formulas they have learned by heart'.[20]

This argument came to define the National Trust's relationship with country houses and their owners and was used repeatedly to mark their historic significance and differentiate them from museums. The Trust's Council wrote that it had 'always been reluctant to countenance the metamorphosis of the country house into the museum...[as] The English country houses were built to live in, and the purpose for which the National Trust exists is to preserve their character unimpaired'.[21]

This distinction between the country house and the museum was crucially linked to the arguments made to justify the continued presence of the family as an essential part of the house. It is implied that if the house ceases to be a home, it will "die", as Vita Sackville-West wrote[22], and that in turn the history of the property will end. This, of course, is not how history works. Continued use, repurposing, abandonment, or destruction all constitute part of the history of a building. As Cannadine reminds us, 'from Tudor to Victorian times country houses were bought and sold, built and demolished at will, as architectural fashion changed, and as owners came and went'.[23] Barczewski's recent study counters the image of the country house as a symbol of endurance by highlighting examples through the Reformation and Civil War of houses which were destroyed, redesigned, and changed hands repeatedly.[24] The country house's history has been re-presented to symbolise endurance and continuity up until the twentieth century, which proved to be a powerful idea. In similar language to Vita Sackville-West's, demolished houses are described as being 'lost' by SAVE Britain's Heritage.[25]

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[20] Philip Kerr, 'England's Country Houses: The Case for Historic Preservation,' Speech given at the National Trust Annual General Meeting, 19 July 1934.
[21] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1943-4, 10.
[22] Vita Sackville West, *English Country Houses*, (London: Unicorn Press, 2014 [originally published 1941]), 91.
[23] Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy,* 243.
[24] Barczewski, *How the Country House Became English*.
[25] 'Lost Houses' listed in Marcus Binney and John Harris (Eds), *The Destruction of the Country House: 40 Years On*, (SAVE, 2014), 14-19.

The importance placed on the continued association between the family and its seat goes beyond the immediate material benefits of the Country Houses Scheme. This was also about protecting the family's identity. Aristocratic bloodlines have an obvious racial or ethnic element. Referring to white individuals as "Anglo-Saxon" is tied to these sorts of connections. The Curzon family, for example, traces its ancestry back to the Norman invasion, and has lived at Kedleston ever since. Being able to trace their ancestry back generations is part of the mythology built around ancient families. In transferring ownership of their country estates, owners were not only giving up financial assets but risking losing control of the family history. Trying to retain these ancestral connections was evidently important to many.

Of course, this does not mean there was no tension between the Trust and the private owner. Robin Fedden claimed that 'the best curator of a house is normally the donor who knows and cherishes it'.[26] However, former owners of Trust properties often disagreed with their management. The centrality placed on the presence of aristocratic families and their ability to keep a country house alive was about an idealised version of a landowner. Fedden and Lord Esher were convinced that the Trust's 'responsibilities for conservation did not extend beyond those of the enlightened private owner', or "EPO".[27] As early as 1944, the Trust acknowledged the need to consider the 'future use' of many of the 'larger houses…should the families of the donors no longer desire to live in them'.[28] In 1943, Lord Zetland had written a letter in *The Times* which led to applications to the Trust from institutions looking to use large country houses, but four years later none had successfully been put in place, which the Council put down to the difficulty and cost of repurposing the buildings and the struggle to find compromises in which part of a country house could be put to institutional use while maintaining its 'artistic character'.[29]

[26] Fedden, *The Continuing Purpose*, 119.
[27] Waterson, *The National Trust,* 146-7.
[28] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1943-4, 9-10.
[29] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1943-4, 9-10.

This raises the question, what was the National Trust providing the public access to? As country houses were transfigured into modern heritage sites, the image of the aristocracy was being domesticated and shifted away from its public role. Laurajane Smith found that country house visitors in the 2000s generally referred 'somewhat cosily and comfortably' to the families connected to the property as "the family" and rarely referred to them as members of the aristocracy or ruling class, or related them to class and power.[30] Kate Retford notes that academic studies of country house art collections have 'paid insufficient attention to its more intimate, private, personal and familial meanings and functions' in contrast to the stately home tourist industry's ability to draw interest to and monetise personal connections.[31] This creates 'vicarious consumption' in which 'the ordinary – a sociable, comfortable evening at home – becomes fascinatingly strange, as it is lifted into the world of the aristocrat'.[32]

In the early years of modern country house tourism, the visibility of the family, or the possibility of seeing them, was a key part of the visit at some properties. The 13th Duke of Bedford, who did not transfer Woburn Abbey to the Trust but is known for successfully marketing his home to visitors, took tours of the house to be seen by visitors on open days and set up a conservation game park in the grounds.[33] The Woburn Safari Park is still open today. The aristocracy had turned themselves into part of the attraction of the house. Now it is less common to see the family in person, but their presence is still felt. Yet some country house owners presented or perceived their choices to turn their own homes into heritage sites as something which was happening *to* them. In the 1970s, the Countess of Radnor complained of needing enough space in the house to keep out of sight of visitors or leave during opening hours.[34] Living in a Trust-owned house, Lord Anglesey likened living in the top floor of Plas Newydd to 'living in the howdah on top of a white

[30] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 137.
[31] Kate Retford, '"A Family Home and Not…A Museum": Living with the Country House Art Collection,' *Art & The Country House*, 20 November 2020, https://www.artandthecountryhouse.com/essays/essays-index/a-family-home-and-not-a-museum-living-with-the-country-house-art-collection, accessed 1 January 2023.
[32] Retford, '"A Family Home and Not…A Museum"'.
[33] Tinniswood, *Noble Ambitions*, 236-7.
[34] Roy Strong, Marcus Binney and John Harris, *The Destruction of the Country House, 1875–1975*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1974, 173.

elephant which somebody else feeds'.[35] In 1974 Lord Montagu paradoxically claimed to belong to his family possessions, stating that they are 'not wealth, but heirlooms' which descendants are entrusted to care for.[36]

The distinction which the Trust placed between its country houses and museums seems connected to this tension. Retford notes that 'the repeated setting of "home-ness" against "museum-ness"' is not simply a matter of categorisation.[37] The Trust's role was complicated by its desire to maintain the houses in ways that kept up the appearance that they were lived in. Waterson summarises the difference between a private owner and the Trust when it came to conservation:

> 'If the 3rd Earl's Irish wolfhound is allowed to chew the Aubusson carpet in the saloon, that is interesting documentary evidence of the family's likes and dislikes; all part of the rich fabric of country house life, at least for a time. But if the National Trust allows the same Aubusson to rot because of too much sunlight or to be shredded by visitors' feet, then it is failing in its statutory duties and is being negligent. Again, Fedden was skating over complex responsibilities when he maintained that the Trust "has no wish to create museums in the countryside, and is not particularly equipped to run them". That line was sometimes used to excuse a cavalier disregard for the conservation of precious objects.'[38]

Once a home became a National Trust "property", it fundamentally changed, but this was clearly difficult for many former owners to accept. Transferring ownership and opening the houses up to the public in this way was simply different to earlier traditions of inviting visitors in to view them. Of course the decision to give up ownership with the ability to preserve the house and continue living in it, makes the victimisation mentioned above strangely misplaced. The reality was that over the past few decades aristocrats had sought to 'exploit their treasures for their own financial

[35] Quoted in Waterson, *The National Trust,* 140.
[36] Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy,* 694.
[37] Retford, '"A Family Home and Note…A Museum"'.
[38] Waterson, *The National Trust*, 146-7.

and personal advantage' by 'persuading large numbers of people to pay money to look at the possessions their forebears had acquired' while simultaneously receiving tax concessions from the government.[39]

Transatlantic Big Houses

The introduction of the Country Houses Scheme instituted a focus on the preservation of art and architecture at the National Trust, shifting its priorities. Between 1945 and the early 1950s the Trust went from owning seventeen houses to having ninety-eight houses and gardens open to visitors.[40] Moody and Small describe the common elements in the presentation of plantation museums in the United States, which parallel those of British country houses.[41] These include mansion architecture, interiors, gardens, elite white lifestyles, and the lives and careers of "great men". In a British Information Services document from 1955 describing the National Trust, its 'Varied Interests' are listed as being the Country Houses Scheme, Picture Collections, Libraries, Farms, and Gardens, as opposed to the open countryside and the 'monuments and sites of English pre-history and history' which they listed under the heading 'The History of the Trust'.[42] The differentiation between the Trust's historic interest in a relatively vernacular heritage and its current one relating to country estates makes clear that the latter was actively prioritised in this period, particularly in the ways that the Trust was presenting itself externally. In the 1930s, there was a transition away from the inspiration of the Arts and Crafts movement and the idealised "Olden Times" to an interest in Georgian architecture and the influences of country house design.[43]

The revival of Georgian architecture among aesthetes in Britain in the 1930s was essential to the reimagining of country houses, which culminated in the National Trust's Country Houses Scheme.

[39] Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy,* 695.
[40] Tinniswood, *A History of Country House Visiting,* 179.
[41] Jessica Moody and Stephen Small, 'Slavery and Public History at the Big House,' *Journal of Global Slavery,* 4 (2019), 34-68, 39.
[42] British Information Services, 'The National Trust,' June 1955, 9162, NT Archive.
[43] Thurley*, Men from the Ministry*, 178-9.

The purpose of country houses as the seats of aristocratic power combined with the European influence on Georgian architecture made it difficult to convincingly argue that these buildings represented something that English people should relate to as a nation. To promote the CHS and 'educate the public in the beauties of the Georgian country house', in 1937 *Country Life* and the National Trust held the exhibition 'British Country Life Through the Centuries', coinciding with the beginning of the CHS and the Coronation and described by Lees-Milne as 'a damp squib, with only four hundred paying visitors in its first week, despite a big send-off'.[44] The exhibition was held at 39 Grosvenor Square, lent by the Duke of Westminster. If Georgian architecture was going to gain wide appeal it had to be rehabilitated to fit modern style and sentiment, having been 'so long damned as alien and exclusive', but some who praised it did so 'precisely for its aloofness from modern life, its elegance, (and) civility'.[45] Its place in colonial architecture contributes to these associations. In the Prefatory Note to the Country Life exhibition, G. M. Trevelyan directly connected the traditions of the English countryside to the success of British colonialism:

> 'The object is to recall to visitors from overseas and to others in this Coronation Year something of the nature and variety of old English country life which, from the days of the Roman villa and the moated Saxon log-house, was the essential life of the Island…It was the variegated and active life of the old English village that supplied the men and women who peopled the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand…The builders of the "country houses," large and small, unlike the French nobles, preferred country to town life. They distributed through the countryside much of the wealth made in the towns or by overseas commerce; much of it they "put into the land" for agricultural improvement, much also into their own mansions and parks, making the island about the year 1800 perhaps more beautiful than it had ever been before, certainly more beautiful than it is

[44] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 306.
[45] Mandler, *The Fall and Rise of Stately Homes*, 265.

> ever likely to be again. They diffused the art of the metropolis over the countryside, adapting it to country uses.'[46]

Again, the English past was used to appeal to an international identity attached to the British Empire, as seen in the Trust's early rhetoric in Chapter Two. Notably, here the fact that country houses were being funded by imperial pursuits is acknowledged explicitly; it is only relatively recently that to make this connection has become controversial.

To date, academic literature about the historical relationship between English country houses and slavery has largely centred on historic financial links prior to the abolition of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Individuals and families who profited from and directly participated in the enslavement of Africans are increasingly well documented, particularly due to the public availability of the Legacies of Slave Ownership Database.[47] The material culture in country houses is also a rich area of study. Examples range from the exotic woods used for panelling walls and staircases, the recurrent pineapple motif in décor, and the Chinese export porcelain tea sets which are found across country houses.[48] The ubiquity of these items has primarily been discussed in relation to the individuals who purchased and displayed them in the past rather than how they have been presented in a heritage context. The Trust has often attempted to display such features and objects as previous owners are thought to have done, or to fit a broader period aesthetic. In Chapter Four, I explored the National Trust's relationship with the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Colonial Williamsburg, among other US historical organisations, in terms of fundraising and the construction of a shared past centred on great white men. Here, my focus is on the "big house" in this context.

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[46] G.M. Trevelyan, 'Prefatory Note,' in *A Loan Exhibition Depicting British Country Life Through the Centuries*, Exhibition Catalogue, 1937, Paul Mellon Centre Library Special Collections, OPPE-1937-13, Paul Mellon Centre, London.

[47] The Legacies of Slave Ownership Database can be accessed on the Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery's Website: https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/, accessed 5 October 2022.

[48] Barczewski studies these examples in detail in Chapter 7 of her book, *Country Houses and the British Empire, 1700-1930,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

The revival of Georgian architecture in the 1930s and the arguments being put forward to preserve country houses saw them as part of a story being told about British history in the mid-twentieth century. In 1934, Lothian presented the country house as a uniquely English tradition in a similar vein to Hussey in *Country Life*. He claimed that the houses, their contents, and their gardens 'represent a treasure of quiet beauty which is not only especially characteristic but quite unrivalled in any other land' and that 'nowhere…have such houses played so profound a part in moulding the national character and life'.[49] As Matthew Johnson has emphasised, Georgian architecture was distinctly British (as opposed to English), created in the same period that Britain was emerging through the Union and as a result expressed a common identity not only across the British Isles but across the Atlantic.[50] A romanticised past, as seen in Chapter Four, was used to appeal to American sentiments as well as British ones, and the success of the narrative of a shared Anglo-American history contributed to the increased numbers of white American tourists visiting Britain, particularly England, in the 1940s and 1950s. Historical sites were a particular draw, which 'the nascent stately-home industry was eager to cash in [on], relentlessly courting Americans and directing its marketing efforts towards America'.[51]

When planning the Williamsburg party in 1955, Rathbone wrote to Lord Esher attaching a list of potential guests that he and Robin Fedden, who would later become Deputy Director-General of the Trust, had brainstormed and divided into three sections. These were listed as Chairmen of Committees and other National Trust staff; 'Official Persons' representing relevant organisations linked to preservation work; and Country House owners, who were further categorised as 'National Trust' and 'Non-National Trust', or 'a few owners of country houses, and National Trust tenants' in a letter to Jack Patterson.[52] The strong presence of country house owners reflects the

[49] Philip Kerr, 'England's Country Houses: The Case for Historic Preservation,' Speech given at the National Trust Annual General Meeting, 19 July 1934.
[50] Matthew Johnson, *English Houses 1300-1800: Vernacular Architecture, Social Life*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 187.
[51] Tinniswood, *Noble Ambitions,* 146-7.
[52] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Lord Esher, 21 October 1955; Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Jack Patterson, 10 November 1955, 9161, NT Archive.

culture of the Trust in this period, and part of the success of the Williamsburg party, according to one guest, was that the atmosphere had felt 'just like a very nice private house'.[53]

Rathbone suggested that given his dedication to the National Trust, Lord Esher was deserving of VIP treatment during his visit to Williamsburg in 1956.[54] The Eshers were to be driven from Richmond in a limousine, shown the exhibition buildings and some 'behind the scenes', and taken on a carriage ride through the restored area by Mr A. E. Kendrew and John Graham.[55] They also visited the James River plantations with John C. Goodbody, and in a letter to Patterson planning the visit Rathbone suggested that Lord Esher and his wife 'would very much like to see' some of the plantations nearby, along with Charlottesville if feasible.[56] Some of the owners of those plantations were invited to the black-tie dinner held by the Williamsburg trustees where Esher gave his speech. Rathbone recalled it as being a 'brilliantly successful speech about England and the National Trust'.[57] He emphasised that Colonial Williamsburg and the Trust shared the same 'policy':

> 'Not only to preserve the exquisite exterior of the past, but also to keep it alive and provide it with a future. In fact we are against a common feature of English life, the multiplication of museums. We strive to keep the families in these ancient houses and our donors and their descendants are entitled to live in them forever. The visiting public enjoy the signs of life and permanence visible around them and you who have such noble houses here all along the James River will understand how dreary they would become if they were empty of human life.'[58]

[53] Correspondence from "M" to Jack Rathbone, 5 December 1955, 9161, NT Archive.
[54] Letter from Jack Rathbone to Jack Patterson, 20 February 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[55] Itinerary for Visit of Lord and Lady Esher, 9162, 'American Tour by the Secretary,' National Trust Archive.
[56] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Jack Patterson, 20 February 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[57] Secretary's Report on Visit to America, 14 September - 27 October 1956, Annexe to Executive Committee and Publicity Committee Agendas, 31 October 1956, 9162, NT Archive.
[58] Remarks by Lord Esher at the Williamsburg Inn, 26 October 1956, 9161, NT Archive.

At the same time as celebrating the place of families in country houses, Esher emphasised the importance of the Trust in guiding them in the management of their homes. Esher suggested that 'Hitler's bombs have effected only very insignificant destruction compared with the ignorance, the indifference, and the avarice of the natives', and the distasteful improvements they made to their houses, particularly in the nineteenth century. Esher suggested that the 'very individual and eccentric' landowners in England would in time 'listen to the patient wisdom which we [the Trust] dole out to them'.[59] He also bemoaned the 'public authority' as the new threat to country estates, which 'only a statutory body like the National Trust can stand up to'.[60] He also explained how the Trust had gained the 'tax privileges that we enjoy' and its use of endowments to sustain its properties.[61]

The National Trust and the NTHP seemingly courted country house and plantation owners in similar ways, with potential guests to the dinner listed as the owners of plantations such as Westover, Berkeley, Shirley, and Toddsbury, 'some of the Valley of Virginia's great houses and possibly even a few from the neighbouring states of Maryland and North Carolina,' as well as 'some of the top people of the National Trust in Washington'.[62] In 2006, several of these houses were listed by Sarah Staniforth, then the National Trust's Historic Properties Director, alongside Colonial Williamsburg as examples of American historic house interpretation that was 'way head' of the British, particularly in relation to slavery.[63] In the 1950s, they were reimagining a past which largely whitewashed slavery, concealing it with beautiful architecture and furnishings. While the English National Trust looked to American donors for funding, the founding members of the NTHP sought guidance from the Trust about the practical management of big houses. During Rathbone's Tour he gave lectures as one method of promoting the National Trust. He was

[59] Remarks by Lord Esher at the Williamsburg Inn, 26 October 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[60] Remarks by Lord Esher at the Williamsburg Inn, 26 October 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[61] Remarks by Lord Esher at the Williamsburg Inn, 26 October 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[62] Correspondence from John M. Patterson to Jack Rathbone, 31 January 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[63] 'What's Happening in Interpretation at Historic Houses?' *Museums Journal*, 13 November 2009, Museums Association website, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/features/2009/11/12400-2/#, accessed 1 September 2023.

advised while planning the trip that Americans 'see "Trust work" as a definite mission to teach and enthuse the public', and that they were enthusiastic about the Trust's historic houses being 'restored to be lived in, not to be preserved as museum pieces'.[64]

When preparing his speech for Williamsburg in 1956, Esher wrote to Rathbone asking for a 'short list of spectacular treasures that belong to the Trust – on the lines of Mary Q. of Scot's nightdress', which was said to have stains of her blood, adding to its authentic association.[65] On the back of Esher's letter, Rathbone began brainstorming some key historic names and associated items. He wrote back to Esher with a final list he had created with James Lees-Milne, noting that it was somehow 'a little disappointing'.[66] The attached list included items linked to Mary Queen of Scots, Katherine of Aragon, Bonnie Prince Charlie, James III, James Wolfe, Sir Francis Drake, Dr. Johnson, the 1st Duke and Duchess of Dorset, and Rudyard Kipling. Objects associated with T.E. Lawrence were left off as they were 'dull' and Rathbone doubted anything at Carlyle's House was 'likely to interest the Americans', while other items that might be added to the list were 'works of art in their own right' rather than 'relics' linked to famous individuals, and so not considered relevant. Today, many of the houses under the Trust's care are used to illustrate lifestyles in different periods and places, but often their connections to historical figures have been promoted as an important feature of the property. The authentic is often linked to a house in this way; if an item on display was used by a particular person, it gains significance and prominence. This association is particularly important to ancestral homes as the descendants of "great men" are a living connection to them, as seen at the beginning of this thesis in the example of Quebec House.

With a greater US presence in the British aristocracy from the late-nineteenth century onward, there may have been an overlap between guestlists and donors across the National Trust and the NTHP. J. Paul Getty, the oil tycoon and richest man in the US, bought Sutton Place, a Tudor mansion in Surrey, in the name of Sutton Place Property Company, a subsidiary of the Pacific Western Oil

[64] Correspondence from John Kerr to Jack Rathbone, 21 February 1956, 9162, NT Archive.
[65] Correspondence from Esher to Rathbone 21 July 1956, 9161, NT Archive.
[66] Letter from Rathbone to Esher, 14 August 1956, 9161, NT Archive.

Corporation, and lived there from 1959 to his death in 1976.[67] As Adrian Tinniswood explains, 'stately home tourism and a desire to acquire a piece of the Old Country' were by this point 'two time-honoured traditions which had been pursued by prosperous white Americans for years'.[68] As shown below, this fits into a longer tradition of individuals styling themselves as country gentlemen for political or cultural clout. When Waldorf and Nancy Astor offered their estate, Cliveden, to the Trust in 1942, they requested that once no more family members wished to reside at Cliveden that the property continue to be used to 'bring about a better understanding between the English-speaking world'.[69] Lady Astor spoke at the National Trust Dinner in 1932, emphasising the 'difference between the beauty of the Old World and that of the New' suggesting that the 'special charm of our villages and of our scenery is due to their having been continuously cared for and tended and loved by successive generations through so long a period of time', suggesting that the aristocracy played a unique role in preserving national heritage.[70] In 1922, they had also visited Nancy's old family home in Virginia, Longhorne House, part of a visit to further Anglo-American relations.

Edwards highlights that the women leading the Colonial Dames and similar organisations like the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) played a crucial role in preserving monuments to public, national history in the form of once-private domestic spaces.[71] The Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution also presented flags with their crests on in 1983.[72] Their work with organisations in Britain helped to cement 'an increasingly Anglo-centric reading of American history, which was itself coterminous with simultaneous efforts elsewhere to assimilate new

[67] Tinniswood, *Noble Ambitions,* 154.
[68] Tinniswood, *Noble Ambitions,* 145.
[69] Memorandum of Wishes from Waldorf Astor, 9 November 1942, 'Cliveden, 1946-1949', Unique ID 6126148, National Trust Archive.
[70] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1932-1933, 8-9.
[71] Edwards '"A Great Englishman",' 173-4.
[72] 'Flag,' Item number NT591818.1, National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/591818.1, accessed 10 October 2022; 'Flag,' Item number NT591818.2, National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/591818.2, accessed 10 October 2022.

immigrants through an assertive program of "Americanization"'.[73] Membership of the DAR and Colonial Dames is determined by an individual's ancestry, and their interest in this can be compared with the importance of bloodlines within the English aristocracy. Their emphasis on the homes of historic figures also poses a clear parallel with the work of the Trust in this period. More infamously, the Daughters of the Confederacy led the way in establishing the pseudohistorical Lost Cause myth, which argues that the American Civil War was not fought over slavery and that enslavement was a positive good. Much of their work to establish the myth centred on the creation of Confederate monuments. While not explored in detail here, this context of course influenced the preservation of plantations as historic houses in the twentieth century along the lines which the English Trust was preserving country houses.

In addition to Old Washington Hall, Sulgrave Manor, the historic home of Washington's family, was preserved as part of a wider series of commemorations to mark the Anglo-American Peace Centenary in 1914. William Howland proposed the creation of an International Body of Trustees made up of British and American citizens and chaired by the American ambassador.[74] A committee of management was formed which suggested that the National Trust might manage the running of the building, with the understanding that the Committee would retain ultimate control given that the property was 'purchased not simply as a relic, but for specific purposes in the future'.[75] The Colonial Dames were instrumental in linking Sulgrave to Mount Vernon, Washington's Virginian plantation. During his trip in 1956, Rathbone visited Mount Vernon and arranged for National Trust publicity to be made available there.[76] Sulgrave has been described as an 'English Mount Vernon', and was framed as a shrine and a site of pilgrimage for Americans.[77] As Richard Handler and Eric Gable highlight in relation to Williamsburg, the motivation behind telling a version of history that celebrates 'the success of the colonial upper crust, and, by

[73] Edwards '"A Great Englishman",' 174.
[74] William B. Howland, quoted in Otte, '"The Shrine at Sulgrave",' 129.
[75] Otte, '"The Shrine at Sulgrave",' 129-30.
[76] Correspondence from Jack Rathbone to Charles C. Wall, 27 December 1956, 9162, NT Archive.
[77] Otte, '"The Shrine at Sulgrave",' 125.

extension, of wealthy individuals like the Rockefellers who used philanthropy to link their genealogies to the American founding fathers', was about affirming the status quo.[78] A similar trend was clearly present at the National Trust. As a result, efforts to highlight the relationship between slavery and big houses in the US and in Britain are 'complicated by their use as largely positive and celebratory identity symbols'.[79]

Seeing the Country House

Traditionally, the furniture and decoration in a National Trust property are displayed without labels to contextualise them, a legacy of the Country Houses Scheme's opposition to the houses being perceived as museums. The amount of historical information and context provided by the Trust through guidebooks, room guides, and other documentation displayed or available to visitors varies among properties. The focus on aesthetics contributes to the desired visitor experience, but also leaves the objects on display with little context. Take the presence of "blackamoor" sculptures, made strikingly visible in 2020 and 2021 when removed from display by the Trust. For many visitors they were taken for granted as part of the period décor, and some claimed the removal of these sculptures was a denial of history, but really it might be the first time the Trust has acknowledged the context they were created and displayed in.

"Blackamoor" was a generic term used to describe anonymised black people seen in European art and literature into the late nineteenth century.[80] As a 'decorative category', the term refers to objects featuring sculpted black African figures, typically depicted in positions of servitude.[81] Displayed within the home, these 'small, utilitarian objects insidiously presented the idea of black servitude as normal, natural or charmingly exotic in the context of a grand table setting'.[82] The

[78] Richard Handler and Eric Gable*, The New History of an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg*, (Duke University Press, 1997), 5.
[79] Moody and Small, 'Slavery and Public History at the Big House,' 36.
[80] Adrienne L. Childs, 'Sugar Boxes and Blackamoors: Ornamental Blackness in Early Meissen Porcelain,' in Alden Cavanaugh and Michael E. Yonan (Eds.), *The Cultural Aesthetics of Eighteenth-Century Porcelain*, (Routledge, 2016), 160.
[81] Lee, 'Serving as Ornament.'
[82] Childs, 'Sugar Boxes and Blackamoors,' 173.

collection and display of these decorative items continued into the twentieth century and the present day. Shohat underscores the continuation of racist imagery from the eighteenth century into the twentieth by connecting the European "blackamoor" to Jim Crow-era cartoon-style depictions of African Americans.[83] In 1944, *Country Life* featured 'the Blackamoor Motif in Furniture' in its "Collectors Questions" segment, responding to a question from Lady Burnham of Hall Barn about 'three curious chairs' featuring black figures, indicating that those who inherited these objects with their estates did not always know about their origins.[84] Once the references to enslavement became anachronistic, the display of these objects perhaps became more ambiguously associated with opulence and wealth. The histories of these objects continue beyond the period they were created and include the ways they have been displayed since the houses became open to the public. While statues depicting enslaved Africans were popular among the English elite, their display at many country houses specifically indicates their owners' direct involvement in slavery, such as at Melbourne Hall in Derbyshire and Wentworth Castle in Yorkshire.[85]

Hannah Lee has written about examples of "blackamoors" in the National Trust's collections at Ham House in London, Knole in Kent, and Dyrham Park near Bath.[86] On the National Trust's Collections Website, the most common examples of "blackamoors" are featured on pieces of furniture and in ceramics. There are also several finials styled to look like the heads of black people at Kingston Lacy, a motif that also features in the family crest. Many of the "blackamoors" in the Trust's collections are torchères or floor lamps, dating from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth. A late-nineteenth-century example at the Cliveden estate is a pair of Egyptian revival-style statues of black children holding torches fitted with electric lights which belonged to Hugh

[83] Ella Shohat, 'The Specter of the Blackamoor: Figuring Africa and the Orient,' *The Comparatist,* 42 (2018), 158-188, 166.
[84] 'Collectors' Questions: The Blackamoor Motif in Furniture,' *Country Life*, 19 May 1944, Country Life Archive, https://www.proquest.com/magazines/collectors-questions/docview/1542798585/se-2?accountid=13042, accessed 29 October 2021, 858.
[85] Dresser, 'Legacies of British Slave Ownership,' 345.
[86] Lee, 'Serving as Ornament'.

Grosvenor, 1 Duke of Westminster, the first President of the National Trust, who lived at Cliveden between 1868 and 1893.[87] An earlier cast of the same model is found at Hughenden.[88] "Blackamoors" are also featured on chairs and tables in which a supporting leg or base is sculpted to look like a black person holding up the sitter or objects. A common example sees a black figure holding a tray on which drinks can be left to look as though a black servant is serving them.[89]

In February 1924, Henry Channon, a Conservative MP, suggested to Lady Grace Curzon, Curzon's second wife, that she hold what he called an "n- party", where guests would "black up" and wear costumes of famous figures and characters.[90] Lady Curzon arranged this 'with enthusiasm'. Forty people attended for dinner, nearly all dressed in 'some sort of hideous get-up' with 'Mr Clarkson…in attendance to blacken the faces of anyone' not in costume.[91] Lady Londonderry attended the party dressed as Circe, the Greek sorceress, whom she was painted as in Edmond Brock's 1925 group portrait of her and her daughters, on display at Mount Stewart.[92] Some people changed costumes multiple times, and partway through the evening Malcolm Bullock, a Conservative MP, arrived dressed as Lord Curzon. Curzon was away at the time in Oxford in his role as Chancellor of the University. At one point Lady Curzon appeared dressed as an elderly black person, limping, and carrying a Bible with her hair whitened: a 'disguise…so complete that everyone was taken in' and unable to recognise her.[93] Around four in the morning, Lord Hillingdon led a mock hunt with four men wearing scarlet coats with cardboard horses and hounds chasing someone playing the fox. Lord Rosebery, former Prime Minister, called it 'the party of the age'.[94]

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[87] 'A Pair of Torchères,' Object number NT65997, National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/765997 , accessed 29 October 2021.
[88] 'A Figural Torchère,' Object number NT428756, National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/428756 , accessed 29 October 2021.
[89] See, for example: 'A Pair of Torchères,' Object number NT413922, National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/413922, accessed 29 October 2021.
[90] Simon Heffer (ed.), *Henry 'Chips' Channon': The Diaries, 1918-38, Volume I* (Hutchinson, 2021), 99-100.
[91] Heffer, *Henry 'Chips' Channon,'* 99-100.
[92] Christopher Warleigh-Lack, 'Art Unlocked: National Trust at Mount Stewart,' Art UK, https://artuk.org/discover/curations/art-unlocked-national-trust-at-mount-stewart/slide-page/3, accessed 1 November 2021.
[93] Heffer, *Henry 'Chips' Channon,'* 99-100.
[94] Heffer, *Henry 'Chips' Channon,'* 99-100.

This anecdote demonstrates a wider point, that the objects found in country houses which referenced the colonies or depicted enslaved people were not simply reflections of wealth or prestige but played a role in normalising and celebrating those connections. When we see objects like blackamoors on display in elite homes disconnected from this social context, they are associated with important artworks and respectability. Moreover, the silence which has surrounded slavery in so many country houses does not map onto other aspects of colonialism. The National Trust has more readily acknowledged South Asian colonial history in its descriptions of its houses than it has connections to Transatlantic slavery. This is perhaps partially explained by the narrative of benevolence stemming from the nineteenth century, which claimed that colonial rule was in the interests of the colonised, and because of the beautiful collection items associated with Asian colonies, as seen in the Museum at Kedleston Hall. In contrast, Transatlantic slavery cannot be spun in the same way, and neither can images of Black people in chains. As Moody and Small highlight, 'the years of silence and absence' that have dominated public interactions with the history of slavery have been shaped by 'the misdirection of interpretive focus on lavish grandeur, fixtures and fittings of the house, or the celebration of the financial, social and cultural power and influence of its white residents'.[95] Moreover, given how Britain has narrated its history as one in which it led the abolition of slavery, these sorts of connections have been widely ignored and downplayed. While the legacies of Transatlantic slavery have been under-explored by the National Trust, particularly before the 2007 Bicentenary, there are aspects of this history which are evident and have always been acknowledged. These trends are created by many small choices the Trust has made over the years, and these choices have defined the story of Britain it tells.

In the catalogue for the 1937 Country Life exhibition mentioned above, an item is listed between a brass candlestick and a dark lantern, described as 'A Slave Collar' with the inscription 'Nicholas

[95] Moody and Small, 'Slavery and Public History at the Big House,' 36.

Curssin, Yatehouse, owner. 1690.', lent for the exhibition by Mrs Radford.[96] Without further documentation, it is not possible to ascertain how this item was displayed or why it was chosen for the exhibition, but it offers one example of an item connected to the history of slavery that is listed among others to illustrate British 'country life'. The stands at Dyrham are 'displayed in the same vein as other decorative artefacts of the house, as "part of the background"' and in a National Trust guidebook they are described passively as having 'arrived' at the house, rather than being bought by the former owner.[97] The continued presence of these objects in the country house is something which was normalised until very recently, with the Trust's decision in 2020 to remove the statue at Dunham Massey. The relevance of Transatlantic slavery to the country house did not end with Abolition. The legacies of the Trade remain at once evident and under-explored.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the country house was turned into something to be looked at by the public. The National Trust's work had a visual focus from its beginnings, rooted in the Arts and Crafts movement; there was a through-line from Octavia Hill's artistic training to the 'programme of aesthetic education' she offered the tenants in her housing.[98] Yet despite the ties between the CHS and the notion of an aesthetic education, the Scheme marked a step away from the charity's original values. Robin Fedden spoke on the wireless in relation to Polesden Lacy, the home of Margaret Greville, in 1946. He said, regarding the property's 'varied contents', that the Trust's objective was,

> 'To create not only the appearance of a large country house of 1910, but the *illusion* of a house still lived in. No red cords or barriers, no notices: but, on the other hand, photographs in characteristically elaborate frames on the tables; on the writing desks the telegraph forms, the embossed notepaper, the ink and the silver pen; in the vases, flowers

[96] *A Loan Exhibition Depicting British Country Life Through the Centuries*, Exhibition Catalogue, 1937, Paul Mellon Centre Library Special Collections, OPPE-1937-13, Paul Mellon Centre, London.
[97] Moody and Small, 'Slavery and Public History at the Big House,' 58-60.
[98] Whyte, 'Octavia Hill: The Practice of Sympathy and the Art of Housing,' 57.

from the garden...I became painfully aware that the life of a house tends all too surely to depart with the owner, and that "museum" and "mausoleum" might not only sound alike.'[99]

In the early period of the Country Houses Scheme, the houses 'tended to be presented as shrines at which only the cognoscenti were qualified to worship, rather than homes, making few concessions to the unlearned until well into the 1970s'.[100] The distinction between the houses being made to look lived in, rather than simply being homes opened to visitors, is crucial. The aestheticized vision of the country house created by curators, often working painstakingly to accurately replicate and restore features of the house, is a representation of a moment in time that never happened. The version of domestic life which visitors see in museums and heritage sites is contrived, as Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant note: 'we become used to seeing exhibited rooms arranged with minimal objects and without inhabitants, often with the fourth wall removed'.[101]

Typically, country houses are 'presented as simply being there because they are there' and 'conserved as found', which contributes to their naturalisation and takes for granted the English conservation tradition, seeing historic sites as 'things that speak and that have their own power and agency in the landscape'.[102] Ironically, this perhaps takes away some of the agency from the people who created, owned, worked and lived in them. In the case of Packwood House, a sixteenth-century home near Solihul, maintaining the house 'as it was' was stipulated in the former owners' wishes. The house was purchased at auction in 1904 by Alfred Ash, an industrialist, because his son, Graham Baron Ash, wanted it. Baron Ash transformed the house during the 1920s to recreate

[99] Waterson, *The National Trust*, 147-8. (Emphasis my own)
[100] Tinniswood, *Noble Ambitions,* 9.
[101] Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant, 'Introduction,' in *Imagined Interiors: Representing the Domestic Interior Since The Renaissance,* (Eds. Jeremy Aynsley and Charlotte Grant, with assistance from Harriet McKay), (London: V&A Publications, 2006), 13.
[102] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 127.

it as 'the perfect English country house', a twentieth-century vision of Old England executed with new money.[103] Ash specified that:

> 'The clause in the Memorandum of Wishes dated 30.6.41, stipulating that the contents of Packwood should not be moved from the rooms in which they had been placed by the donor, [is] to be interpreted to mean that thereby they must never be lent to temporary exhibitions or removed from their respective positions for any purpose whatsoever.'[104]

The Committee accepted this interpretation of the clause, and this decision reflects the wider practice that the Trust adopted at this time: the re-creation of the country house as a time capsule, made to appear unchanging and complete.

Cannadine emphasises that 'it is wholly misleading to see the aristocracy as country-house owners and custodians first and foremost, and to neglect or to ignore their many other activities'.[105] By doing so, we distract from the real histories of these people with glamour and beauty. As the aristocracy was losing its explicit political dominance in the twentieth century, many of its members took on more 'ornamental' roles, often in Britain's colonies.[106] Yet at the same time, the great hostesses continued to shape elite society and in turn politics. Lees-Milne wrote in 1945 that the country house culture's 'zenith' was in the eighteenth century, but that until WWI the great houses of England still served as a background for the pursuit of the arts, sport and politics', and highlighted the so-called Cliveden Set as a more recent example.[107] As part of the justification for their continued presence, the histories of aristocratic families were retold in terms of art collecting and architectural fashion, despite their collections being 'the almost random by-product of confident and largely indifferent patrician activity'.[108] By association and

[103] 'History of Packwood House,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/warwickshire/packwood-house/history-of-packwood-house#cb-141249594-1, accessed 12 September 2021.
[104] Country Houses Committee Minutes 9 June 1948, 8
[105] Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy,* 245.
[106] Cannadine, The *Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy.*
[107] Lees-Milne, 'The Country House,' 76.
[108] Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy,* 695.

setting, sometimes mediocre art collections were elevated to the status of national heritage. A transition took place through the CHS: country houses went from being understood explicitly as political spaces – famously designated 'power houses' by Mark Girouard - to heritage sites viewed mostly for their beauty.[109] This is how Sir Thomas Robinson, Governor of Barbados 1742-7, came to be 'chiefly remembered as an amateur architect who championed the Palladian style'.[110] Lees-Milne suggested that country houses were 'the traditional archives of our past and present'.[111] By the 1990s, the 'most impassioned defenders' of country houses claimed that they are 'Britain's greatest contribution to civilisation'.[112] The myth that generations of aristocrats had been collecting artworks to curate collections for the greater good, despite being inaccurate, was effective.

Conclusion

The vision of country houses that was preserved in aspic in the mid-twentieth century is one that often hides from view the people who created the wealth on display, and who were subjugated by the former owners of the house. As Smith emphasises, the image of the country house was not about its role as a home: its architecture 'is an explicit statement about the status and power of the family within'.[113] Yet, an overwhelming focus on the aesthetics of the country house has contributed to the difficulties the Trust faces in better accounting for these histories. This might offer an example of 'exposure' as I proposed in the introduction to this thesis. The house and the histories associated with it are supposed to be looked at, but little beyond taste and design choice is discernible. In the following Chapter, I consider some of the ways that Curzon has been presented by the National Trust, continuing this theme of over and under-representation. The emphasis on the aesthetic has made it difficult to see behind the curated displays. As Moody and Small suggest, in the plantation house, elites are personalised and humanised at the expense of

[109] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House,* 2.
[110] Dresser, 'Legacies of British Slave Ownership,' 345.
[111] Lees-Milne, 'The Country House,' 61.
[112] Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, 242.
[113] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 119.

the enslaved and the 'obsessive focus given to material authenticity in British heritage stands as an obstacle in rethinking interpretive strategies which instead must foreground human experience'.[114] In the next chapter, I continue this theme of over-representation, focusing on how Curzon has been represented by the National Trust through Kedleston Hall.

[114] Moody and Small, 'Slavery and Public History at the Big House,' 64.

Chapter 6 Curzon II: Remembering and Forgetting

'It was not enough that Curzon should save ancient monuments from decay: he must also write their histories.'[1]

In Chapter Three, I explored some of the connections between Lord Curzon and the National Trust, as well as his career in historic preservation both in India and England. In this Chapter, I consider more broadly how he has been and is remembered today. My interest is not in rewriting Curzon's biography but in questioning how he is remembered (or not) in broader terms. Curzon was someone who identified himself with the monuments he restored, created, and wrote about, and in turn, he has been monumentalised by others who have written biographies, named places after him, and curated his former homes.[2] Broadly, I am interested in how figures like Curzon are in many ways over-represented in the historical record, and how this creates less understanding of their role in history, not more. Specifically, I am interested in the National Trust's role in presenting the histories of "great men" through their houses and its changing approach to representing the history of the British Empire in relation to them, and how Curzon fits within this. The nature of the country house archive and collection means it is easy to tell its history sympathetically, and often as though it existed in a vacuum. This is made more acute by the Trust's focus on decorative arts and the furnishings of its houses. However, there is great potential for a house like Kedleston to be a place where collective understanding of British colonial history is bettered. This chapter is split into four sections. Section 1 considers the continued legacy of Curzon's family at and his presence today through monuments and memorials. Section 2 considers these themes more specifically at Kedleston, and Section 3 explores how the National Trust has presented colonial history there over time. The final section broadens out again,

[1] Kenneth Rose, *Curzon: A Most Superior Person*, (London: MacMillan, 1985), 9.
[2] See for example: Lawrence Dundas, Earl of Ronaldshay, *The Life of Lord Curzon: Being the Authorized Biography of George Nathaniel, Marquess Curzon of Kedleston,* (Three Volumes), (Boni and Liveright, 1928); David Dilks, *Curzon in India,* (Two Volumes), (London: Rupart Hart-Davis, 1969); Kenneth Rose, *Curzon, A Most Superior Person: A Biography*, (MacMillan, 1985); David Gilmour, *Curzon: Imperial Statesman,* (London: John Murray, 1994).

focusing on the difficulty of writing about those who are so overly represented and treated with great deference in the present and the ways that individuals are remembered (and forgotten) unequally.

Curzon's Continued Presence

When I visited Kedleston Hall in 2021, I dreamt that Curzon met me there. I was standing under a shelter in the gardens and he appeared from around the corner and asked me what I was doing there. Clearly, I was a little self-conscious about being in his former home. Part of this came down to the continued presence of the Curzons who live at Kedleston today. When Curzon died in 1925, Kedleston was inherited by his nephew Richard Curzon, 2nd Viscount Scarsdale and then by Francis Curzon, 3rd Viscount Scarsdale in 1977. The National Trust's original guidebook for Kedleston Hall describes the changing financial circumstances of the Curzon family. The American money injected into Kedleston through Curzon's marriage to Mary 'earned a temporary respite' at the beginning of the twentieth century but once the house had gone through two sets of 'crippling capital taxes' it became unaffordable to maintain family ownership.[3] Lord Scarsdale was determined to keep the house and its contents in one piece, so after debate about dividing it among the family he struck a deal with the National Trust. The National Heritage Memorial Fund, created in 1980, contributed £13.5 million of taxpayer money and Lord Scarsdale provided £1 million, with the Trust raising a further £2 million through one of its biggest appeals to cover the costs.[4] In the Trust's 1988 Kedleston Hall guidebook, the reader is warned that if the remaining £250,000 of the appeal is not met, the collections in the house would be under threat: 'as you tour Kedleston Hall, try to imagine how the state rooms would look if some of their furnishings were removed'.[5] The Trust's appeal for Kedleston Hall was supported by the Royal Oak Foundation, having just collaborated with the Trust over the *Treasure Houses of Great Britain* exhibition in

[3] Kedleston Hall, National Trust Guidebook, (1988), 78.
[4] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree*, 283.
[5] Kedleston Hall, National Trust Guidebook, (1988).

Washington, which featured items from Kedleston.[6] In 1987 an exhibition of Adam drawings from Kedleston was held at the Heinz Gallery and then toured museums in the US.[7]

Kedleston Hall has been in the National Trust's care since and members of the Curzon family still occupy the Family Wing, designed by Matthew Brettingham and described by Lord Scarsdale as 'the grandest semidetached in the country', which they rent from the National Trust, along with 4,000 acres of the estate surrounding the house which remain owned by the family.[8] On the Trust's site map the family's garden is greyed out and marked as private, with a note reminding visitors to 'please respect our neighbours'.[9] In contrast to the first few decades of post-War country house visiting, when there was a chance you could spot family members in the grounds, today the tenants are conspicuously out of view. Despite the archive at Kedleston being a public one, I felt nervous going through the Curzons' old things. Some of the family's personal archive is in the Muniment Room, which overlooks their private garden, alongside the documents owned by the National Trust, potentially blurring the boundaries between the two sets of owners.[10] As a result, when I moved through the property I felt the continued presence of the Curzons and a disquiet that came from being conscious that I was looking into a history that is so recent in what is partly such a personal setting. Much of this history remains fraught for those who live thousands of miles away in what was India during Curzon's viceroyalty and for members of the South Asian diaspora around the world.

In recent years, there have been repeated controversies surrounding the visibility of Curzon in the present day. In 2017, Balliol College's removal of the painting of Curzon which hung in its

[6] National Trust Annual Report 1986, 8.
[7] National Trust Annual Reports and Accounts 1987, 10.
[8] Weideger, *Gilding the Acorn*, 109-110.
[9] 'Kedleston Walks,' National Trust map, 2019, accessed via National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/peak-district-derbyshire/kedleston-hall, 1 August 2023.
[10] In recent years there has been some contestation around the ownership of these archives. See: Richard Eden, 'Curzon Clan "Fight National Trust for £1m Family Archive,' *Daily Mail*, 29 July 2022, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-11059531/EDEN-CONFIDENTIAL-Curzon-clan-fight-National-Trust-1m-family-archive.html, accessed 1 August 2023.

dining hall in Oxford made national headlines.[11] The painting, by Philip Alexius de László, was given to the College in 1959 by Curzon's daughter, Mary Irene, Baroness Ravensdale. The College stated that the picture was moved for maintenance work, at one point reassuring 'a descendant of the former Viceroy that, despite "the heat generated over statues in Oxford", the painting was undergoing conservation work'.[12] The College was accused of removing the painting of Curzon to avoid controversy in the context of the wider Rhodes Must Fall campaign taking place at the University. Undergraduate and postgraduate students at Balliol had passed motions through their common rooms to join demands for the removal of the statue of Rhodes at Oriel College, and one of the motions mentioned the painting of Curzon as the College's own example of a colonialist being 'honoured'.[13] In its place, the painting *Magdalen* by Emily Carrington Freemen, a Balliol alumnus, was hung, and when the conservation work was completed the painting of Curzon was placed elsewhere in the College. A spokesperson for the College stated that the painting was hung in 'a busy teaching area for historians, where it often stimulates informed historical discussion and debate' and that it is 'absurd to allege the portrait has been removed from sight to avoid any controversy'.[14]

The concern expressed over the possible erasure of Curzon as part of Balliol's history is unfounded. The College is famed for having trained imperial administrators and its website explains who Curzon was and how he was connected to the College and University, alongside the Marquis of Lansdowne, Earl of Elgin, and Alfred Milner.[15] Curzon's name is found throughout Balliol, including on a plaque on the East Wall of the Antechapel, among other Honorary Fellows

[11] Jonathan Petre, 'Oxford's Balliol College Removes Portrait of "Colonialist" Statesman After Complaints from Students and Replaces It with Art by a Female Graduate,' *Daily Mail,* 23 December 2017, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5209047/Oxfords-Balliol-College-removes-portrait-statesman.html, accessed 4 August 2023.
[12] Greg Ritchie, 'Balliol Accused of Bowing to "anti-colonial" Pressure by Moving Viceroy's Portrait,' *Cherwell*, 27 December 2017, https://www.cherwell.org/2017/12/27/balliol-accused-of-bowing-to-anti-colonial-pressure-by-moving-viceroys-portrait/, accessed 4 August 2023.
[13] Ritchie, 'Balliol Accused of Bowing to "anti-colonial" Pressure'.
[14] Ritchie, 'Balliol Accused of Bowing to "anti-colonial" Pressure'.
[15] 'Balliol and the Education of Colonial Administrators,' Baliol College Website, https://www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/balliol-and-the-education-of-colonial-administrators, accessed 4 August 2023.

and Benefactors.[16] He is also remembered through the Curzon Memorial Prize, awarded for an English essay 'on some aspect of Indian life or history'.[17] Curzon is remembered in this way because he was part of a generation that ensured they would be remembered through the built environment, putting their names to buildings and their faces to statues. Monuments to Curzon and his family outside of Oxford include roads named after him - at least 251 postcodes are attached to the Curzon name[18] - and a bridge in Uttar Pradesh.[19] Even my mum lives on an Edwardian street bearing the family name. There is also a road near Tattershall Castle called Curzon Estate, presumably named in his honour, too. The Curzon Line refers to a proposed demarcation line dividing the Second Polish Republic and the Soviet Union Curzon suggested in his role as Foreign Secretary in 1919. Curzon Hall stands in the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh, built around the time of the partition of Bengal, where Curzon laid the foundation stone in 1904.[20] Writing in the 1920s, E. V. Lucas described Calcutta as somewhere that it was easier 'to be suddenly transported to England than in any other India city' but that a key difference was that there were 'more statues of Lord Curzon than we are accustomed to'.[21]

As noted in Chapter Three, two statues of Curzon were included at the Victoria Memorial Hall in the 1910s. Following his death, a statue of Curzon was also created in London. Initially, his family wanted it to be at Waterloo Place near other former viceroys and Colin Campbell, 1st Baron Clyde, who was Commander-in-Chief during the 1857 Uprising in India. The Department of Works

[16] 'Memorial Inscriptions,' Balliol College Archives & Manuscripts, Balliol College Website, https://archives.balliol.ox.ac.uk/Past%20members/memorials.asp#gsc.tab=0, accessed 1 August 2023.
[17] 'Curzon Memorial Prize,' University of Oxford website, https://governance.admin.ox.ac.uk/legislation/curzon-memorial-prize#:~:text=The%20prize%20shall%20be%20called,of%20Indian%20life%20or%20history, accessed 1 August 2023.
[18] Based on a search for "Curzon" on Nominatim Open Street Map website, https://nominatim.openstreetmap.org/ui/search.html?q=Curzon, accessed 7 March 2023.
[19] The construction of the Lord Curzon Bridge is documented in a photo album in the Curzon Collection at the British Library. See: Photo 430/58, Curzon Collection, British Library, (London).
[20] Interestingly, a photograph album titled 'Dacca, February 1904' contains only general views rather than recording his tour of the area. See: British Library website, Archives and Manuscripts Catalogue, Curzon Collection: 'Dacca, February, 1904', Photo 430/31, https://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=IAMS_VU2&docid=IAMS040-003084174&lang=en_US&fromRedirectFilter=true, accessed 1 August 2023.
[21] E. V. Lucas, *Roving East and Roving West,* (London: Methuen & Co, Ltd., 1921), 50.

rejected this idea, and his statue was erected in 1931 'on a modest corner of Carlton Gardens'.[22] This placed Curzon across the road from his former home on Carlton House Terrace, and Stanley Baldwin unveiled the statue at a ceremony (see Image 17 in the Appendix).[23] The Duke of York column can be seen from Curzon's statue, just 120 yards away, facing St James' Park. A similar ceremony had been held to unveil one of the statues of Curzon outside the VMH, documented in a dedicated photograph album.[24] The Victoria Memorial Hall album also ends with pictures of the Curzon statue.[25] There are written monuments and memorials of Curzon too. Curzon was described by Henry Channon as a 'brilliant descendant' to the Curzons who built Kedleston.[26] P. W. Wilson described the Earl of Ronaldshay's biography of Curzon as being like 'a lifelike statue'.[27] Similarly, Winston Churchill, who was one of the pall bearers at Curzon's funeral, described Curzon's life like a statue in his epitaph: 'the morning had been golden, the noontide was bronze, and the evening lead. But all were solid, and each was polished till it shone after its fashion'.[28] There is no question that Curzon can still be looked at, but how accurately he is seen remains a question.

Curzon was also active in creating monuments to others. The height of the British Empire saw a lot of powerful men monumentalising each other, ensuring they would remain in history. As seen in Chapter Four, Curzon campaigned for the creation of the statues of Clive in London and in Calcutta. The statues Curzon commissioned in 1907 were controversial. Lord Minto, Curzon's successor as Viceroy, and John Morely, Secretary of State for India, both opposed the addition of

[22] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History through Statues,' 366.
[23] A video of Baldwin's speech and the unveiling is available on the Pathe website. See: 'London: Curzon Statue Unveiled by Stanley Baldwin (1931),' Pathe website, https://www.britishpathe.com/asset/171999/, accessed 1 August 2023.
[24] 'Photographs taken at the Unveiling Ceremony of the Statue of the Earl Curzon of Kedleston' Photo 430/61, Curzon Collection, British Library.
[25] 'Victoria Memorial Hall,' Photo 430/62, Curzon Collection, British Library.
[26] Heffer, *Henry 'Chips' Channon: The Diaries (Volume 1): 1918-38*, 84.
[27] P. W. Wilson, 'Lord Curzon of Kedleston as A Lifelike Statue,' *New York Times,* 6 January 1929, 4, New York Times Times Machine, https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1929/01/06/95867804.html, accessed 1 August 2023.
[28] Winston Churchill, *Great Contemporaries*, (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1943), 226.

this statue 'fearing that it would further inflame anticolonial tensions in India', presumably reflecting concerns over how these would be received in India.[29] As Ghosh highlights,

> 'Curzon was a powerful figure with a great deal of authority to tell a history of empire that was intended to overlook the many ways in which Indians dissented from colonial conquest…In 2020…protestors drew attention to the ways that existing monuments were installed at moments when white supremacy was promoted and being actively consolidated. The turn of the twentieth century, when Curzon promoted the building of the Victoria Memorial Hall, was one such moment. Curzon's role in actively commissioning monuments…coincide with this period of global statue-mania; through his patronage, Curzon revived the reputation of those who were widely known to have been corrupt colonial figures.'[30]

Ghosh notes that monuments to Rhodes which were being created in the early twentieth century were also often controversial, as illustrated by London officials' refusal to install a statue of Rhodes in London in the 1930s.[31] Curzon contributed to the design of the now-removed statue of Cecil Rhodes at the University of Cape Town. When it was being designed, the problem of statues in suits looking 'comically ordinary' was solved by Curzon's suggestion that the figure be depicted in a seated position, successfully giving a regal impression.[32]

In real-time, Curzon placed himself in the historical canon alongside his heroes and contemporaries. As seen in Chapter Three, Curzon dressed as Lord Wellesley for a drinks reception in 1903 and he physically placed himself into the historic record of India in his own lifetime with the addition of his own items to the Victoria Memorial museum displays. Although, seeing himself immortalised could be disappointing: Arthur Lee, 1st Viscount of Fareham, recalled

[29] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History through Statues,' 365.
[30] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History through Statues,' 369.
[31] Ghosh, 'When Rhodes was Not Built'.
[32] Alex von Tunzelmann, *Fallen Idols: Twelve Statues That Made History*, (Headline Publishing Group, 2021), 117-8.

seeing Curzon at Madame Tussaud's in London in 1910 'gazing with concentrated attention, but…a trace of disappointment, at his own effigy in wax'.[33] Curzon's place in the lineage of the great men of history contributed to the mythologisation of his personality. Curzon began collecting documents and objects associated with Napoleon from 1908, following a visit to St Helena.[34] His collection included a copy of Napoleon's death mask, which he left to the University of Oxford in his will.[35] In a letter in 1901, Mary told Curzon that 'in Lord Rosebury's summing up of Napoleon, he exactly describes you', highlighting his memory and eye for detail.[36] Curzon placed himself within the annals of history in real time, similarly suggesting elsewhere that, like him, 'every really great man from Caesar to Napoleon has been a master of detail'.[37] Curzon was also famously difficult to work with, though Dhara Anjaria's account has challenged the ways these traits have been exaggerated by Curzon's biographers.[38]

Seeing Curzon at Kedleston

The country house itself can be a monument. In a revealing anecdote, Stephanie Barczewski recalls a trip to Montacute House in Somerset, which Curzon rented between 1915-1925 and became a National Trust property in 1931. Montacute House was one of the Trust's first country houses, described by James Lees-Milne as one of the 'fairly insignificant buildings' the Trust owned before the Country Houses Scheme, having been transferred to the charity 'empty of contents'.[39] Montacute was where Curzon waited in 1923 for the phone call making him Prime

[33] Gilmour, *Curzon*, 424.
[34] 'Lord Curzon's Letters Concerning his Napoleon Collection,' Bodleian Archives website, https://archives.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repositories/2/resources/2307, accessed 1 August 2023.
[35] Lot Listing for Napoleon's Death Mask, Sworders, https://www.sworder.co.uk/auction/lot/lot-356---napoleons-death-mask-electrotype/?lot=242358&so=2&st=&sto=0&au=815&ef=&et=&ic=False&sd=1&pp=100&pn=1&g=-1, accessed 1 August 2023.
[36] Letter from Mary Curzon to George Curzon, 30 March 1901, in John Bradley (Ed.), *Lady Curzon's India: Letters of a Vicereine,* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Limited, 1985), 78.
[37] Derek Linstrum, 'The Last of the Augustans: Lord Curzon and Indian Architecture,' in Philippa Vaughan (Ed.), *The Victoria Memorial Hall Calcutta: Conception, Collections, Conservation*, (Marg Publications and The Calcutta Tercentenary Trust, 1997), 30.
[38] Dhara Anjaria, *Curzon's India: Networks of Colonial Governance, 1899-1905,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 8.
[39] Lees-Milne, *People and Places,* 11.

Minister that never came. Barczewski told a National Trust guide that standing in the home envisioning the scene led her to feel almost sorry for him and they replied: 'no, it doesn't. He wasn't a very nice man'.[40] Barczewski credits the guide with reminding her that 'the elite were not inherently good simply because they lived in beautiful houses'.[41] This exchange reflects something about the power of the house-as-heritage-site in creating sympathy. As seen in the previous Chapter, the overwhelming focus on country houses as primarily visual places with ties to former owners which was encouraged by the National Trust through the CHS in the mid-20th century might contribute to this kind of response from visitors to historic houses today. Laurajane Smith's research provides useful data about visitors' emotional responses to country house visitors, particularly the theme of deference towards former or current owners of the houses; they also often mentioned connections between country houses and royalty as a significant part of their appeal.[42] Barczewski quotes David Cannadine about the 'endless (and mindless) veneration of posterity' that she joins him in seeking to 'rescue' the British upper class from.[43]

In contrast, Weideger suggests higher-ups at the Trust 'believe that donors should be treated gently', that they 'have indulged donors excessively', leading the public to 'feel more contempt for them than they deserve and less for the Trust than is its due'.[44] Writing in the 1990s, Weideger saw that 'the people running the National Trust today appear to identify as much with the inhabitants of these grand houses as did James Lees-Milne and Lord Esher'.[45] The guidebooks for visitors to National Trust properties have often evolved from texts originally written by the former owners. The 1988 Kedleston Hall guidebook acknowledges the Viscount and Viscountess Scarsdale's 'generous assistance', as well as Mr Leslie Harris, who had been acting as the archivist at Kedleston for ten years and become the Trust's 'special adviser' for the house.[46] However, these

[40] Barczewski, *Country Houses and the British Empire,* xvi.
[41] Barczewski, *Country Houses and the British Empire,* xvi.
[42] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 139.
[43] Barczewski, *Country Houses and the British Empire*, xiii.
[44] Weideger, *Gilding the Acorn*, 90-1.
[45] Weideger, *Gilding the Acorn*, 90-1.
[46] Kedleston Hall National Trust Guidebook, (1988), 78.

relationships have often been difficult. Lord Scarsdale was appalled by the Trust's removal of a fountain from the garden at Kedleston:

> 'It was awful really. This was put up by not any member of the family but the greatest Curzon who ever lived – Viceroy of India and everything else. He was immensely proud of his home. He loved the idea of bringing this fountain here. Why shouldn't it stay?'[47]

An object that formerly belonged to Curzon being moved, let alone his image in the case of the portrait at Balliol College, is framed as an insult. Having transferred ownership of the family seat to the Trust, Lord Scarsdale seems to have been surprised by the consequences, echoing others former owners' concerns: 'I must say it sounds naïve,…but you can't anticipate everything. It never really occurred to me or certainly not to my advisers to clear these questions. What about the future?...You're not going to make it too museum-like, are you?'.[48] Decades into the Trust's Country Houses Scheme, former owners still found themselves in conflict with the Trust over their roles and decisions.

Kedleston is the key National Trust property associated with Curzon, though his presence is felt at Bodiam, Tattershall, and Montacute, through the display of photographic portraits and information about his role in their restoration. Kedleston is a short drive from Derby city centre and is one of the largest Palladian mansions built in Britain, designed to rival nearby Chatsworth. The hall is structured around a central block, designed to be a 'temple of the arts' and used for entertaining, rather than being lived in by the family. The first floor's entrance is grand, designed for guests, and the ground floor entrance was for everyday use among the family, who lived in the family wing. Robert Adam's designs reference Ancient Rome, particularly in the Marble Hall on the first floor, which has large alabaster columns supporting an ornate ceiling fitted with domed skylights. Photographs and objects linked to Curzon are found at various points through the tour visitors take of Kedleston, but the section most directly linked to his life is the Museum. When

[47] Francis Curzon, Viscount Scarsdale, quoted in Weideger, *Gilding the Acorn*, 110.
[48] Francis Curzon, Viscount Scarsdale, quoted in Weideger, *Gilding the Acorn*, 111.

Curzon visited the British Embassy in Paris after Lord Hardinge was replaced as Ambassador in 1922, he wrote about what a pleasure it was to see the house without "tiger skins, the silver caskets, the elephant tusks and common photographs of Charlie Hardinge" but instead oil paintings from Crewe House.[49] The place for 'Indian trophies' in a 'classical house, Curzon insisted, was "in some rather out of the way corner"' and in his own home 'they are insulated in their own museum'.[50] Despite wanting to keep his collection separate from the rest of the house, the museum was clearly important to Curzon and he planned it in great detail. Inside it are twenty Edwardian display cases filled with a combination of artworks, decorative items, weaponry, and other items acquired during his viceroyalty. There is also a set of ivory-veneered furniture which Curzon purchased from the Maharajah of Benares in 1903. The furniture was originally created and presented to an earlier Maharajah by the British for services rendered during the 1857 Uprising. This furniture is believed to have been in Carlton House Terrace before it was moved to Kedleston as part of the Museum in 1925.[51]

The closest parallel to Curzon's 'Eastern Museum' at Kedleston within the National Trust is the Clive Museum at Powis Castle, in Wales, created from the collections of Robert Clive and his son, Edward.[52] The Clive Museum was opened by Countess Mountbatten of Burma, daughter of the last Viceroy of India, at the same time the Trust was holding its Kedleston Appeal in 1987.[53] At both Kedleston and Powis, the Museums and their collections are physically separated from the rest of the interiors shown to visitors. As Barczewski notes, displaying collections from across the Empire in 'purpose-built "museums" which were separate from the rest of the house' presented the colonies as something 'alien and "other"'.[54] Yet at the same time, objects associated with these collections were a part of late Victorian and Edwardian upper-class domestic spaces. Photographs

[49] Curzon quoted in Kenneth Rose, *Curzon: A Most Superior Person*, (London: Papermac, 1985), 7.
[50] Rose, *Curzon*, 7.
[51] See, for example: 'Sofa,' Object number NT107722, National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/107722, accessed 20 October 2023.
[52] Rhea Tuli Partridge is currently researching this collection. See: Rhea Tuli Partridge, 'The "Complications" of the Clive Collection: "Conflict", Culture Wars and *Lut*,' (Forthcoming PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge).
[53] National Trust Annual Reports and Accounts 1987, 10.
[54] Barczewski, *How the Country House Became English*, 250.

of the Marble Hall at Kedleston with tiger skin rugs from the 1890s attest to how trophies and souvenirs from Asia were a greater part of the country house's aesthetic than is often clear from the arrangement of these houses today (see Image 9 in the Appendix).[55] In comparison to other country houses, imagery associated with empire is easier to look past. At Osterley Park in West London the 'conspicuous presence' of Asian furniture, textiles, and porcelain throughout the house 'has historically figured as an anomalous backdrop'.[56]

Some of the incongruities of these properties are born out of the tensions created when displaying a house that has been lived in for over two hundred years as though it was frozen in time and suggesting to visitors that they are seeing it "as it was", as discussed in the previous chapter. As Aslet writes, 'even country houses that strongly evoke a single period are often palimpsests where one era overwrites another, a process that may happen again and again until the deep past is no more than a ghostly, indecipherable smudge'.[57] In the case of Kedleston, the layered nature of the house is exaggerated by Curzon's early-twentieth-century additions to the house, through which he finished some of Robert Adam's incomplete work using his original designs. Curzon himself acknowledged changes made to buildings do not simply erase their heritage, writing that 'whether its occupation lasted for a single century or for three, whether it slowly crumbled to pieces or was suddenly or systematically despoiled, it perpetuates the memories and is haunted by the spirits of those times'.[58]

When I visited Kedleston in November 2021, the Museum was closed to visitors, having been shut for a 'year of listening' during which the Trust worked towards the redisplay and reinterpretation of the Museum.[59] The last time the Trust made alterations to these displays was in 2011. The

[55] Richard Keene, Saloon, Kedleston Hall, c. 1890, (Photograph), National Trust Collections.
[56] Margot Finn and Kate Smith, 'The Social Life of Things,' in Finn and Smith (Eds.), *The East India Company at Home 1757-1857*, (London: UCL Press, 2018), 23.
[57] Aslet, *The Story of the Country House,* 3.
[58] George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquis of Kedleston, *Bodiam Castle, Sussex: A Historical & Descriptive Survey,* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926), 144.
[59] 'A Year of Listening,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/kedleston-hall/features/a-year-of-listening, accessed 20 October 2023.

visitor route was also changed, meaning that visitors entered the house from the ground floor 'as they would have done in the past' and the house was re-presented to look as it would have 'at the beginning of the twentieth century when Lord Curzon was Viceroy of India'.[60] As a result, Curzon was re-centred in the house. Additional furniture was purchased, enabling visitors 'to sit by the welcoming, roaring fires and rest before moving on to the state floor and taking in the Neo-classical show palace'.[61] What used to be the Kitchen Corridor was opened again: 'the reintroduction of Lord Curzon's trophy corridor', filled with taxidermy, in addition to the Billiard Room.[62] Among the new items in the Trust's collection was an additional trophy to add to the atmosphere of an Edwardian country house: a tiger skin rug. The tiger skin was purchased in 2010 from Russell Oxley, a taxidermist in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, and dates from the 1930s, almost a decade after Curzon's death and two decades later than he was in India.[63] The rug's purpose is illustrative, its place in the house contributing to an imagined version of what the house might have looked like when Curzon lived there. During a research visit to Kedleston in 2021, I studied the photograph albums from the Delhi Durbar facing the tiger, obscured by the tissue paper covering it for conservation purposes.

Remembering and Forgetting Empire at Kedleston Hall

Where connections have been made between colonialism and the country house by the National Trust, it has tended to be referenced in quite cozy or novel ways, such as the fireside tiger skin rug at Kedleston, and by serving food referencing the Empire served in cafes. At Blickling Hall in 2017, the Trust held an exhibition highlighting Lord Lothian's role as Under-Secretary of State for India in the 1930s to mark the 70th anniversary of Indian Independence and Partition. What is interesting about this programme of events was that it clearly centred on the political role of the country house, yet simultaneously the National Trust insisted that the exhibition itself not engage

[60] National Trust Annual Report 2011-2012, (London: National Trust, 2012), 24.
[61] National Trust Annual Report 2011-2012, 24.
[62] National Trust Annual Report 2011-2012, 24.
[63] 'Tiger Skin,' Object number NT110021, National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/110021, accessed 20 October 2023.

with the politics itself, only the aesthetics: 'Sue Price, visitor experience officer at the National Trust attraction, stressed that local staff and volunteers wanted to mark this 1930s link rather than become involved with the political side of the 1947 Partition'.[64] The irony and naivety of this statement dates the exhibition, which centred on 'dinner party diplomacy'[65] by 'taking visitors back in time to July 1938 and a country house party'.[66] This involved 'themed food in the cafes', alongside props on display, 'costumed interpretation featuring "The Jewel in the Crown"', and the national flag of India, adopted in 1947, created from plants in the garden.[67] The 'themed food' parallels a similar choice at Kedleston where curry has been served in the Restaurant. In 2019, the Trust's website described Chana Masala as a 'typical chickpea curry' originating from the south of India, where Curzon had been based as Viceroy, the implication being that visitors can eat food he would have been having in India, despite it originating from the Punjab region in northern India.[68] As early as 2009, Kedleston's kitchen was serving food described as 'exotic and spicy…in keeping with the history of the Palladian mansion'.[69] This was at a time when the Trust was promoting the use of local produce and recipes through its food outlets, and before it had embraced Blickling Hall's links to India; the head chef noted that he would not serve 'dishes like lasagne…because that is of Italian origin and has nothing to do with Blickling'.[70] In 2015, the Trust even began serving spiced hot chocolate 'to evoke the house's Caribbean connections' at Dyrham

[64] Trevor Heaton, 'A Passage to India: How Blickling Played Its Part in a Nation's Struggle for Independence,' *Eastern Daily Press*, 4 March 2017, https://www.edp24.co.uk/lifestyle/20846219.passage-india-blickling-played-part-nations-struggle-independence/, accessed 1 July 2023.
[65] Heaton, 'A Passage to India'.
[66] 'A Taste of India,' National Trust website, https:/www.nationaltrust.org.uk/blickling-estate/features/a-taste-of-india, accessed via web.archive.org 1 July 2023.
[67] 'A Taste of India'.
[68] 'A Recipe Inspired by the History of Kedleston Hall,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/kedleston-hall/features/a-recipe-inspired-by-the-history-of-kedleston-hall, accessed via web.archive.org, 1 July 2023.
[69] Valerie Elliott, 'Cooks Offered a Slice of Britain's Culinary Heritage,' *The Times,* 27 May 2009, 22, The Times Digital Archive, https://go-gale-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/ps/retrieve.do?tabID=Newspapers&resultListType=RESULT_LIST&searchResultsType=SingleTab&retrievalId=b46ac6d1-34dd-423e-abfa-92ff4388b123&hitCount=388&searchType=BasicSearchForm&currentPosition=81&docId=GALE%7CIF0503846128&docType=Article&sort=Pub+Date+Reverse+Chron&contentSegment=ZTMA-MOD2&prodId=TTDA&pageNum=5&contentSet=GALE%7CIF0503846128&searchId=R1&userGroupName=oxford&inPS=true, accessed 1 July 2023.
[70] Valerie Elliott, 'Cooks Offered a Slice of Britain's Culinary Heritage'.

Park.[71] There is something to this approach to a sort of multicultural authenticity without properly engaging with the histories and legacies associated, which is of course partly about marketing but also shapes the histories the Trust tells. This also speaks to the ways that the country house visit serves to domesticate the image of statesmen, seen again in the story the Trust tells about Winston Churchill's favourite wartime cake.[72]

The recent move to incorporate references to the history of Empire in National Trust properties is not brand new, but the style of interpretation that is being implemented has shifted. In 2003, the National Trust held an exhibition about the Delhi Durbar of 1903 at Kedleston Hall, with accompanying events such as public lectures to help promote the display. Held during the bicentenary of the Durbar, the exhibition celebrated Curzon's leading role in organising the events and commemorated his Viceroyalty. It was held in Curzon's library and smoking room, separate from the Museum. A *Country Life* review of the exhibition describes items on display that were loaned by the Curzon family including 'Lord Curzon's own pith helmet and the tin box labelled "Wanted on Voyage" in which it sailed with him to India'.[73] While the pith helmet is in many ways a symbolic object, illustrating a key part of the visual culture of the British Empire, in this context its presence is also very personal. Curzon is at the centre of the story as the individual who pulled off the organisation of the event, and as the stand-in for the King and Emperor.[74] The item being loaned by the Curzon family adds to the personal nature of the object. There is a parallel here with the representation of General Wolfe at Quebec House through the display of personal items – Wolfe's cloak and Curzon's helmet - alongside military models. William Britain Delhi Durbar model soldiers were loaned for the 2003 Exhibition.

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[71] Knight, 'Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History'.
[72] 'Churchill's Fruit Cake,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/discover/food/recipes/cakes-bakes-desserts/churchills-fruit-cake, accessed 1 July 2023.
[73] Charlotte Cory, 'Curzon's Pomp & Pachyderms,' *Country Life*, 4 September 2003, 197:36, 110, Country Life Archive, https://www.proquest.com/countrylifearchive/docview/1513170118/fulltextPDF/2BF2805D3DA446C3PQ/1?accountid=13042, accessed 1 June 2023.
[74] The Delhi Durbar was one of three held to mark the succession of the British monarch as Empress/Emperor of India. In 1903, King Edward VII did not attend, meaning Curzon acted in his place.

The focus of the exhibition was on the pageantry and spectacle of the Durbar. The role of pageantry in colonial rule was important to Curzon, who saw it as 'inseparable' from history and believed the two were interchangeable.[75] As Ghosh argues, the Durbar paralleled the creation of the Victoria Memorial Hall as something designed to unite India under British rule that ultimately demonstrated how divided it was.[76] In the National Trust's exhibition, the events of the Durbar were celebrated as a personal triumph for Curzon. The Trust's exhibition presents the Durbar as a primarily visual event, reflecting the many ways it was recorded through film, photography, and artworks as well as newspaper reports and other documentation. This perhaps fulfils Curzon's own wishes on some level, having 'himself remained convinced that the Durbar would "not be forgotten"'.[77] In contrast, the institutional memory at National Trust properties is often short. Most of what remains of the Delhi Durbar Exhibition in 2003 seems to be in the dedicated box in the archive in the Muniment Room at Kedleston.[78]

In 2013, an exhibition was held at Kedleston which again engaged with British-Indian history, but this time with contemporary art pieces created by Asian artists. This was part of *Shakti*, a programme of four art exhibitions held by Meadow Arts across England and Wales. The other exhibitions in the programme were held at Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Powis Castle, and Oriel Davies Gallery, also in Powis. "Shakti" is a Sanskrit word selected to refer to 'formidable engagement and channelling of creative powers', reflecting the artists' works across the exhibitions.[79] At Kedleston, artworks by eight different artists were displayed, including Gilded Head by Ravinder Reddy and Harminder Judge's film 'Kedleston and Coronation Park'. Judge's film was screened at a pop-up cinema in the grounds of Kedleston in August 2013, as part of an event with Kathak dance workshops, puppet performances, and popcorn bhajis.[80] Like the Delhi Durbar

[75] Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, 78.
[76] Ghosh, 'Stabilizing History through Statues, Monuments, and Memorials in Curzon's India,' 361-363.
[77] Cannadine, *Aspects of Aristocracy*, 88.
[78] 'Delhi Durbar 1903 Exhibition Season 2003,' Box in Muniment Room, Kedleston Hall.
[79] 'Shakti,' Meadow Arts website, https://meadowarts.org/event/shakti/, accessed 1 August 2023.
[80] Caroline King, 'Popcorn Bhajis & Pop-Up Cinema Brings Bollywood to the National Trust,' *Contrary Life*, 23 August 2013, https://www.contrarylife.com/2013/08/popcorn-bhajis-pop-up-indian-cinema-brings-bollywood-to-national-trust-20235/, accessed 1 August 2023.

Exhibition ten years earlier, there is no record of these exhibitions on the National Trust's website. Once again, the subject of this thesis is obscured from view.

In 2023, an exhibition *My Adornment is My Power* was held at Kedleston Hall. The exhibition involves commissions from several artists: Anisha Parmar, a jewellery designer, curated a display of her own pieces alongside the jewellery already in the collection at Kedleston, shown in Caesar's Hall; a film by Ofilaye, featuring a performance from dancer and choreographer Kesha Raithatha, spoken word and music from the Grewal Twins, is being shown in the Billiard Room. Photographs of Raithatha wearing some of the jewellery on display in the exhibition are displayed in the Saloon. The stated aim of the exhibition is to 'unlock the untold stories of some of the jewellery pieces from the Museum at Kedleston Hall and celebrates these historic pieces for their beauty, craft and meaning'.[81] The exhibition, and the film in particular, focus on 'Solah Shringar – the South Asian ritual of proudly adorning the body with jewellery'.[82] Parmar was inspired by a quote from Mary Curzon, which described the Maharani of Jodhpur's jewellery weighing down her ankles and huge emeralds 'in chains around her neck', implying that the Mahrani's jewels represented her subordination in India.[83] Parmar recalls reading the quote as an assumption:

> 'That this South Asian woman was oppressed by her dress and adornment, and how Mary Curzon was using this as a metaphor to show the contrast between East and West, I knew that dispelling this myth was central to how I wanted to approach this project.'[84]

The exhibition responds to the quote by demonstrating the significance of adornment in South Asian culture and its empowering potential. Perhaps the most significant part of this exhibition for the National Trust are the photographs, recording the jewellery from the collection was being

[81] 'New exhibition in 2023 with Anisha Parmar "My Adornment is My Power",' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/peak-district-derbyshire/kedleston-hall/visit-the-hall-at-kedleston, accessed 1 August 2023.
[82] 'New exhibition in 2023 with Anisha Parmar'.
[83] Anisha Parmar, 'My Adornment is My Power,' Anisha Parmar London website, 20 March 2023, https://www.anishaparmar.com/blogs/news/my-adornment-is-my-power, accessed 1 August 2023.
[84] Parmar, 'My Adornment is My Power'.

worn for the first time in over a hundred years. Engaging physically with the historic collection, rather than being limited to an artistic response displayed alongside or nearby, adds a certain weight to this exhibition and the shift in the role of the curator that is currently taking place. One of the National Trust curators I interviewed emphasised their decision to take a step back and ensure that the artists they were collaborating with led the conversation.[85]

As it stands, there is currently a temporary exhibition about British-Indian history at Kedleston Hall once every ten years. Temporary exhibitions in museums and heritage organisations are often critiqued for their lack of lasting impact, used as an opportunity to engage with marginalised histories without necessitating any structural changes to permanent displays. Much worse is when they are not even recorded through web pages listing previous exhibitions, as this means that each time the Trust adds new interpretations, such as the labels added through the Colonial Countryside Project, or creates a new exhibition like *My Adornment*, it must begin again. At the time of my visit, a museum label had been added to the tiger skin as part of the Colonial Countryside project, explaining that tiger hunting was an important part of elite British culture in India in the early twentieth century,[86] accompanied by a poem by one of the children participating in the project. At the time of writing, the only record of the project on the National Trust's website is a brief overview, which states that the Project's legacy 'is to ensure that colonial connections are integral to the stories that audiences discover during their visit', having previously had the children's writing on dedicated webpages.[87] Frustratingly, the copy of the poem which remains visible online is accessed through Restore Trust's website, where it is criticised for lacking 'nuance or empathy'.[88] In part, these issues are part of the transient nature of webpages, particularly when

[85] Interview with National Trust Curator, 16 June 2022.
[86] See Image 11 in the Appendix to this thesis, showing Lord Curzon and Maharaja Sindhia in Gwalior after Curzon's first tiger hunt.
[87] 'Colonial Countryside Project,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/research/colonial-countryside-project, accessed 1 August 2023.
[88] 'Kedleston, Lord Curzon and the Eastern Museum,' Restore Trust website, https://www.restoretrust.org.uk/restore-trust-issues/kedleston-lord-curzon-and-the-eastern-museum#:~:text='2019%20was%20a%20year%20of,is%20displayed%2C%20interpreted%20and%20represented., accessed 1 August 2023.

these events and exhibitions are taking place within such a large, disparate institution. There is a real need to address this through archiving and it is part of a much broader issue, but for the Trust it is not a new one. In parallel to the exhibitions at Kedleston, similar interventions have been made at Dyrham Park over the years, such as the 2007 project between the National Trust and First Born Creatives funded by Heritage Lottery Fund called "RE:Interpretation" and an exhibition in 2012 called "A World Away". Yet, as Moody and Small highlight, 'despite the presence and historic record of black servants and pages, domestics and even descended family at British country houses, such connections are rarely part of permanent holistic narratives of these sites'.[89]

The permanent display of Curzon's museum contrasted with the repeated temporary displays and interventions is a well-worn pattern throughout Britain's museums, galleries, and heritage sites. This contributes to the difficulty that curators working for the Trust and the individuals they collaborate with have in being made to justify the relevance of this work without being able to point to previous examples. Other temporary exhibitions held at Kedleston are mentioned in the National Trust's Annual Report for 2011-2012, including Susie MacMurray's piece 'Promenade' in 2010, Theresa Nguyen's silversmith residency in 2011, and 2012's landscape installation 'Hear Here', but the following year's Report does not seem to mention *Shakti*.[90] Currently, there is renewed interest and energy towards exhibitions and workshops which engage the local South Asian community in Derby, but these efforts continue to depend on engaged and knowledgeable National Trust staff members, and these efforts are yet to be institutionalised. In 2004, a partnership between the National Trust and Surtal Arts called 'Untold Story' took place, during which South Asian women's groups and students collaborated with artists to 'interpret the collection of the Eastern Museum'.[91] This programme was referenced during a discussion between

[89] Moody and Small, 'Slavery and Public History at the Big House,' 54.
[90] National Trust Annual Report 2011-2012, 24.
[91] David Prudames, 'Untold Story Project Brings Kedleston Hall's Indian Past to Life,' *Culture24*, 6 October 2004, http://www.culture24.org.uk/history-and-heritage/art24349, accessed 13 December 2021.

members of the Museums Association, National Trust, English Heritage, and Historic Royal Palaces held in 2006 about changing interpretation in historic houses.

Using the 2006 project as a successful example of a National Trust property engaging a group of people who typically would not visit, with a note of surprise that South Asian women could relate to the history of the house, Ruth Taylor explained: 'it was getting past that barrier, it's not just about modern properties having a link, you can make links through the older properties but you have to find the way to help people, to have meaning for them'.[92] Almost twenty years ago, the discussion turned towards the need to look for ways to embed this work and ensure its longevity. Emma Carver suggested that at the Trust 'the biggest inroads' were happening through events focused on specific audiences and expressed hope that 'in the next few years that this is changed and updated and much more challenging', presumably to the core membership.[93] Acknowledging this is a wider issue across the sector, Denise Foster emphasised that 'for us [it] will be Untold Story where the really big challenge is keeping the links that we've made and the expectations that we've created with 18 different user groups at those properties going'.[94] This discussion took place just ahead of the Bicentenary of the Abolition of Slavery a year later. The Trust has continued to engage with the histories of colonialism and slavery since this discussion, but this has often been in minimal and short-term ways. With the publication of the Interim Report in 2020, a larger scale project to address these histories more systematically has begun.

The lack of records of older projects contributes to missed opportunities for the work being done through these exhibitions to be developed. *Untold Story* saw the women involved teach the Trust 'about the state of things in the Indian Museum', including 'objects of different faiths just laid together not in the right way', leading it to 'refresh' the interpretation.[95] Yet only now is a serious

[92] 'What's Happening in Interpretation at Historic Houses?' *Museums Journal*, 13 November 2009, Museums Association website, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/features/2009/11/12400-2/#, accessed 1 September 2023.
[93] 'What's Happening in Interpretation at Historic Houses?'.
[94] 'What's Happening in Interpretation at Historic Houses?'.
[95] 'What's Happening in Interpretation at Historic Houses?'.

rethink of the Museum taking place. Through *Shakti*, a connection was made between Kedleston and Powis as the two houses chosen for exhibitions, both having famous connections to India and museums of collections connected to previous owners' travels. Having established that connection more publicly in 2013, by 2023 we could be seeing a much more complicated and developed picture of the connections between different country houses and their networks; instead, we are still establishing a shared public recognition that it is worth talking about their connections to India at all.

Writing about the Past and Present

Curzon wrote about each of the historic houses he lived in or owned, and his published and unpublished works include histories of Government House in Calcutta, Walmer Castle, Hackwood Park, Montacute House, Tattershall Castle, Bodiam Castle, and Kedleston Hall. His book about Bodiam, *Bodiam Castle, Sussex: A Historical & Descriptive Survey*, was published posthumously and outlines the Castle's history and the excavations performed under his ownership from 1916-1925, during which he oversaw archaeological and conservation work. In the publisher's prefatory note, Curzon is quoted as having said 'a house…has to my mind a history as enthralling as that of an individual'.[96] Curzon believed in the role of monuments in the construction of collective memory and shaped his own legacy through the preservation of existing monuments and the construction of new ones, as seen with the creation of the Victoria Memorial. In one of his speeches promoting the construction of the VMH, Curzon stated that 'a nation that is not aware that it has had a past, will never care to possess a future'.[97] At the same time, he was conscious of the limited abilities of monumental buildings and statues to ensure any particular memory. His awareness of the power

[96] H.N., 'Note,' in George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquis of Kedleston, *Bodiam Castle, Sussex: A Historical & Descriptive Survey,* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926), v.
[97] George Curzon, 'Queen Victoria Memorial,' 6 February 1901, *Lord Curzon in India: Being a Selection from His Speeches as Viceroy and Governor-General of India, 1898-1905* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1906), 521.

and fragility of historic monuments is reflected in Curzon's choice of epigraph to open *Bodiam Castle*. Curzon quotes Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

> 'The art of man is able to construct monuments far more permanent than the narrow span of his own existence; yet these monuments, like himself, are perishable and frail; and in the boundless annals of time his life & his labours must equally be measured as a fleeting moment. Of a simple and solid edifice it is not easy, however, to circumscribe the duration.'[98]

An epigraph can be a quote used at the beginning of a piece of writing, as seen here, or can be an inscription on a building or a statue. Curzon sits within the tradition of history writing identified by Dan Hicks in which authors write 'about the past as if they were erecting a monument', much like the quotes about Curzon seen above.[99]

As the National Trust has taken steps toward accounting for the histories of the properties in its care, the response has been as though they had knocked statues down. Simply by listing (often well-known) connections between individuals, their former homes, and careers tied to colonialism, the Trust was seen in some circles to be attacking those individuals, misrepresenting the past, and doing something fundamentally unfair. In the Trust's *Interim Report*, the entry for Kedleston Hall explains that Alfred Nathaniel Curzon, 4th Baron Scarsdale (1831–1916) married Blanche Senhouse (1837–75), whose grandfather, Sir Joseph Senhouse (1743-1829), owned estates with plantations in Dominica and Tobago.[100] Restore Trust, the self-described forum 'where members and friends of the National Trust can discuss their concerns about the charity's future'[101], criticised the Report for indirectly linking Curzon to the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

[98] Quoted in George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquis of Kedleston, *Bodiam Castle, Sussex: A Historical & Descriptive Survey,* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1926).
[99] Dan Hicks, 'Glorious Memory,' in Helen Carr and Suzannah Lipscomb (Eds.), *What is History Now? How the Past and Present Speak to Each Other,* (Hatchette, 2021), 109.
[100] Sally-Anne Huxtable et. al., Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties Now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery, National Trust, 2020, 85.
[101] 'About Us,' Restore Trust website, https://www.restoretrust.org.uk/about-us, accessed 20 August 2023.

Restore Trust suggests that the National Trust's Report 'lapse[s] into a discussion of the merits of empire in general' when it notes this connection to Caribbean slavery and 'presents no evidence that any of the money derived from these plantations found its way to Kedleston'.[102] Restore Trust also notes that Blanche Senhouse was born after slavery was abolished, implying that this negates the connection.

In response to the announcement that the museum at Kedleston is changing, Restore Trust suggested that 'a significant point of view will be lost'.[103] Barczewski suggests that the Eastern Museum is emblematic of Curzon's political views which romanticized India's past and were firmly against moves toward self-government.[104] Many of the items on display document British rule, such as the silk proclamations and silver caskets, while others showcase Indian arts and crafts. The Museum has continued to be presented by the Trust as Curzon had intended. The idea that the museum should not be altered feels specific to its context in the country house; museums are always changing, but this one has acted more as a shrine for much of its existence. The existing curation of the museum has not allowed other, significant, points of view: that is the whole point.

As a child, Curzon heard 'tales of horror' about the 1857 Indian Rebellion from Sir Henry Wilmot, who had been awarded the Victoria Cross and often visited Kedleston.[105] In a guide to Kedleston Hall produced prior to the National Trust's takeover of the property, Curzon's role in the British Empire is folded into the family lineage and directly linked to medieval chivalry. Describing the family monuments in the Church at Kedleston, the guide describes how 'the effigies range from a Curzon in chain mail to another in the robes of Grand Master of the Star of India – of India, that exotic Empire, now itself an historical memory, but which he ruled as Viceroy'.[106] The "but" insists

[102] 'Kedleston, Lord Curzon and the Eastern Museum,' Restore Trust, https://www.restoretrust.org.uk/restore-trust-issues/kedleston-lord-curzon-and-the-eastern-museum, accessed 20 July 2023.
[103] 'Kedleston, Lord Curzon and the Eastern Museum,' Restore Trust, https://www.restoretrust.org.uk/restore-trust-issues/kedleston-lord-curzon-and-the-eastern-museum, accessed 20 July 2023.
[104] Barczewski, *Country Houses and the British Empire: 1700-1930,* 228-9.
[105] Nayana Goradia, *Lord Curzon: The Last of the British Moghuls,* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, 1997 edition), 13-4.
[106] 'Kedleston Hall: The Historic Home of the Curzon Family, The Residence of Viscount and Viscountess Scarsdale: Official Guide' (Derbyshire Countryside Ltd., Undated).

that despite Indian Independence, what matters to posterity is that Curzon was there. These connections add weight to the suggestion that Curzon approached his appointment as Viceroy 'as if it were an inheritance'.[107]

Further research into the links between country houses and colonialism and slavery needs to be carried out. Despite claims that, in publishing its Report, the National Trust was telling the nation things it already knew about itself, and 'lecturing' it[108], it is only really since the creation of the Legacies of Slave Ownership Database, as part of the Legacies of British Slave-Ownership project which ran from 2009 to 2012, that this kind of research has taken off. As Madge Dresser points out, 'the often bewildering network of family connections, colonial investments, and government appointments indicates the need for further research not just into the properties themselves, but also into the social and political networks in which such properties are embedded'.[109] The relationship between country houses and slavery, as well as the broader Empire, is not news, but understanding the nature and depths of those relationships is only just beginning to emerge.

What really defines any attempt to write about Curzon, or the other men turned into statues in the early twentieth century, is that they are still so overwhelmingly present. In the Family Wing at Kedleston, Curzon continued to use the bedroom he had as a child, and arranged another himself 'as an exact replica of his Eton room' with his old books and bureau 'on which he once did his "lines" he now writes treaties and moulds the geography and destinies of Europe'.[110] Some Trust historic houses continue to be presented in this way, such as Rudyard Kipling's former home, Bateman's, in Sussex. The sheer wealth of documents, images, and objects associated with the Curzons of the world makes it difficult to see them. The nature of country house archives in particular create "great man" histories, with the head of the household being over-represented.

[107] Christina Casey, 'Subjects and Sovereigns: The Husbands and Wives Who Ruled British India, 1774-1925,' (PhD Thesis, Cornell University, 2017), 27.
[108] Sarah Young, '"Do Not Lecture Us": People Cancel National Trust Memberships in Anger After it Discusses Links to Slavery,' *The Independent*, 24 August 2020, https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/national-trust-slave-trade-colonialism-links-cancel-membership-twitter-a9685026.html, accessed 2 September 2020.
[109] Dresser, 'Legacies of British Slave Ownership,' 346.
[110] Heffer, *Henry 'Chips' Channon: The Diaries (Volume 1): 1918-38*, 84.

At the same time, the Trust and its membership have contributed to the creation of a collective memory which feeds this phenomenon. The passage from Henry Channon's diaries describing Curzon's Eton room at Kedleston somehow perfectly sums it up:

> 'The walls are spotted with fading Eton groups in funny frames and the tables are littered with albums (for Lord Curzon has a weakness, amounting almost to folly for albums) containing photographs of hundreds of little white-tied, top-hatted companions of his youth. Under their names are their marriage and death dates meticulously inked in every week by the great Foreign Secretary himself, whose heart is still at Eton and in this little room that was his as a boy. Over the mantle are two photographs, one of his mother that has been his all his life, the other of his original Eton room of which this is so accurate a copy…In another album there are photographs too … of ladies with tight waists and bustles and strange bonnet-y hats. As one turns the pages the ladies become less lovely, less corpulent, more famous … the hats become pyramids of flowers and mountains of plumes. Under each are also dates but no names. And only their collector knows what secrets bind their faces to him. What would the world say if it knew of the existence of this room? Would it destroy the Curzon legend and make him as human as the rest of us? … would he leave his Olympian pedestal?'[111]

What became of this room after Curzon died is unknown as it is in the Family Wing, which is still lived in by the Curzon family today and so is not open to the public. As Moody and Small suggest, the "banality" of the country house's grandiloquence and nationalism that Laurajane Smith identifies can also be seen in terms of the banality of the British Empire's bureaucracy.[112] In Curzon's case this seems particularly relevant as we imagine him writing correspondence from this room as a former Viceroy known for his extensive memos in contrast with the visual spectacle of the Durbar and the Victoria Memorial Hall. Fundamentally, it is difficult to see or understand

[111] Heffer, *Henry 'Chips' Channon: The Diaries (Volume 1): 1918-38,* 83-85.
[112] Moody and Small, 'Slavery and Public History at the Big House,' 34-68, 55.

the history of British colonialism from the vantage point of the country house, despite the wealth of relevant material. What stands out writing this chapter is the personal nature of these spaces, and the difficulty in reconciling this with the global high politics they are connected to.

Conclusion

When Mary Curzon died in London at Carlton House Terrace in 1906 Curzon wrote to her mother, reassuring her that:

> 'My arms were round her and the only two other persons present were Casey and excellent Nurse Read. They did all the [sic] was required, the room was shut up, and no one not even I have been in since. She had, like me, a horror of anyone seeing the dead.'[113]

This respect for Mary's wishes, and specifically the wish not to be seen, is significant. Curzon famously built an elaborate tomb for Mary and was later buried with her, echoing the work he put into the Taj Mahal and the Victoria Memorial. Curzon spent six years collecting the materials for his memorial to Mary, including 'the Aventurine quartz for the floor, the Serravezza marble for the tomb, the stained glass, the chapel furniture, the iron grilles he designed from the rejas of Spanish cathedrals'.[114] The ability to create such grand memorials of course reflects the enormous privilege of these people, but so does the basic respect shown in not allowing Mary to be seen. Researching and writing this thesis, it has been striking to see how the wishes of former owners and their descendants have informed the National Trust's presentation of its houses. Certainly, there is something to be said about the respect paid to descendants whose aunts, uncles, and grandparents' histories are being told through their family homes. At the same time, by prioritising this, the Country Houses Scheme created practices within the Trust which undermined its ability to be honest about the histories of its own properties.

[113] Letter from Lord Curzon to Mrs Leiter [Mary's mother], 19 July 1906, published in John Bradley (Ed.), *Lady Curzon's India: Letters of a Vicereine,* (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Limited, 1985), 169.
[114] Gilmour, *Curzon*, 359-360.

In Britain, the descendants of those who suffered enslavement, forced displacement, and other atrocities through colonial rule continue to face marginalisation and discrimination. Their histories are difficult to locate in archives not designed to tell them. At the most extreme, unidentifiable individuals, whose remains are stored in museums, are looked at and used in the present to tell history. Systematically, they are dehumanised through institutional practices,[115] in contrast to the deference the National Trust exhibits towards the memory of people who lived in its historic houses. In stark contrast, the descendants of people who created and profited from those moments, who have inherited estates built from them, try to insist on their 'right to be forgotten'.[116] The right to erasure, to be left out of research, and the right to insist their well-documented family histories not be told, or told in the way they want them to be.

This Chapter has focused on the historical memory of Curzon, rather than his life history, which has been well documented. Drawing on the context of the Trust's Country Houses Scheme and its role in promoting "great man" histories, this chapter emphasises the distorted memory of Curzon which has been created over time. The fears expressed that Curzon might somehow disappear or actively be erased by the removal of the painting from the Balliol College dining hall are common in debates about monuments and museums. In Chapter One, I proposed the idea of 'overexposure' as a way to talk about the over-representation of influential historical figures in our collective memory. Throughout this thesis, I have been writing about what is chosen to be preserved, and therefore seen, and who the intended viewers might be. In this chapter, the idea of overexposure seems most relevant. Curzon is highly visible, and yet this makes him in some ways less reachable. In Chapter Seven, I pick up on the debates about the National Trust changing its approach to history-telling, situating the Trust's current approach to colonial history and the backlash it has faced within a wider context of questions about the Trust's purpose.

[115] Sydney Rose Stewart, An Anthropological Theory of Dispossession, (PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, forthcoming).
[116] Ed Thomas and Joshua Nevett, 'Antoinette Sandbach: Ex-MP Asks to be Removed from Slavery Research,' *BBC News*, 31 August 2023, BBC website, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-66648763, accessed 31 August 2023.

Chapter 7 The Scone Question

In October 2021, a pressure group known as Restore Trust was encouraging National Trust members to vote in the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM) for candidates who had its backing to be elected to the Trust's council. Restore Trust describes itself as a grassroots campaign group dedicated to ensuring the National Trust does not stray from what it understands to be its original purpose. It was set up in the wake of the Trust's publication of its *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery* in September 2020, which had been met with outraged media coverage and criticism from Conservative MPs. The National Trust's ability to fulfil its core purposes was repeatedly questioned and the authors of the Report were accused of political bias and their academic credentials were questioned. The Report is essentially a compilation of existing information about links between the National Trust's properties and various aspects of colonial history, with acknowledgement from the authors that previously the Trust has neglected these histories in its representation of the past. Much of the focus in the articles published in *The Telegraph* and *The Spectator*, which led the affronted reporting, was on the idea that it was in some way inappropriate for the National Trust to research or share this kind of history. In essence, they argued it should continue to neglect these histories. One argument that was made against the Trust talking about slavery, indentured labour, or famine, was that these topics would take away from the "nice day out" the Trust is known for providing its visitors. In the midst of the heated media coverage leading up to the 2021 AGM, Robert Shrimsley, political commentator and executive editor at the *Financial Times*, called for less politics, saying that he wanted the National Trust to get back to its 'original mission' of serving cake, joking that many visitors cannot understand why the Trust 'don't just turn the big house into an enormous café'.[1] It is a well-worn cliché that visiting a National Trust house is all about the ubiquitous trip to the tea room. By the

[1] Robert Shrimsley, 'The National Trust Row is Obscuring Its Core Mission: Cake,' *Financial Times Magazine,* 22 October 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/ac829cf5-d3ec-493b-aef0-57a946d1ba18, accessed 1 October 2023.

late 1980s, it was already known, to the upset of 'purists' that some people visit the National Trust houses 'principally for food'.[2]

This chapter explores the controversy which has surrounded the National Trust's Interim Report, situating it within a longer history of controversies and tensions around the National Trust's purpose and methods. In a chapter of this size, it is not possible to detail all the accusations and criticisms that have been made about the Trust since 2020, so this is a partial summary. As part of my research for this thesis, I interviewed five National Trust curators, and this chapter draws on the insight I gained from our conversations, which are referenced throughout. These conversations took place in the summer of 2021, so their comments reflect the interviewees thinking and reaction to the controversy surrounding the Report less than a year after its publication. Fundamentally, these conversations evidenced a belief in the importance of this work but concerns about ensuring its longevity and sustainability in relation to impetus, encouragement and guidance from central management, as well as funding, time constraints, and confidence. I combine the interviews with the findings of Laurajane Smith's 2006 study of country house visitors, which surveyed 454 people who were visiting six different country houses, and explored how the respondents understood, expressed and identified with the prescribed narrative of the country house as heritage site.[3] This chapter also draws extensively on the media coverage of the National Trust, mostly since 2020, but also going back to the early 2000s and demonstrates that similar questions have been asked about the Trust for over twenty years now. I argue that the National Trust country house holds an ambivalent position in the present day, and consider the different, overlapping roles the Trust has taken on over time of preservation, education, and entertainment.

[2] Rosemary Burton, 'Food: A Trust house's real forte,' *The Times*, 25 August 1986, 16, The Times Digital Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/IF0503065683/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmarkGDCS&xid=13ce3481. Accessed 6 November 2021.
[3] Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage,* 116.

The Trust's priorities have evolved throughout its history, as this thesis has shown in the context of imperial history. The Country Houses Scheme created a tension between the Trust's ideal of public benefit and its sense of obligation to the former owners of the estates. Moreover, the expectation that the visitor in some ways take on the values of the country house, showing a polite respect for the families and their histories while appreciating the design and taste on display, meant the experience appealed to people inclined towards this way of viewing the country house and encouraged others to do the same. Over the past twenty years, the Trust has made changes to the ways it presents its houses, both by introducing different elements of their histories more explicitly, and by finding new ways to engage visitors with them. However, the dominant way of seeing the National Trust country house, as a display with minimal signage or context, remains.

This chapter begins with an overview of some of the key developments and arguments that were made in response to the Trust's publication of its interim Report in 2020, situating this within a longer history of similar controversy dating back to the 1980s and 1990s. This chapter uses the period of August 2020 to November 2021 as a sample to explore some of the fundamental tensions at the heart of the National Trust. By looking at 2020 and 2021 in detail, I cover the immediate reaction to the National Trust's publication of the Interim Report, but the timeframe is somewhat arbitrary. As these events are not over, focusing on this period helps to keep the narrative tight. However, this story also did not begin in 2020. There were earlier iterations of the same argument over the Trust and its relationship with landowners and the public, going back to the criticisms from Rawnsley in the 1960s, the heritage debates of the 1980s, and arguments over hunting in the 1990s. As I introduced in Chapter One, the Trust has been collaborating with other bodies and researchers since the early 2000s to address the colonial histories of its properties, and more broadly has engaged with the histories of gender and class as well. This has been welcomed but also repeatedly caused controversy, which has heightened in recent years but is not new.

The second section considers the Trust's multiple roles, which often seem to conflict with one another. It is an organisation which preserves buildings and objects, provides access to them to the public and interprets them, and has a range of commercial activities it uses to support its charitable work. I argue that these roles do not cancel each other out, and that in publishing the 2020 Report, the Trust was furthering its mission, not moving away from it as some critics suggested. The third section focuses on how the National Trust acknowledges that its workforce, volunteers, and membership are disproportionately middle class and white. The Trust's leadership have often claimed to want the Trust to become more representative of the nation it serves, but the Trust has repeatedly faced backlash for trying to tell more diverse histories. The chapter finishes with questions about the country house as a place for escapism for many National Trust visitors, and how this can be reconciled with the histories which underpin these places. I conclude that the current debates about the National Trust are about fundamental tensions in the Trust's identity, and that the Trust should work to resolve them in order to move forward.

A History of 2020

A month before it published its Interim Report in September 2020, the National Trust posted a Twitter thread with information about objects in its collections, such as the mahogany furniture, chocolate pots, sugar casters, and various ivory goods found in its houses, to commemorate UNESCO's Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition, on the 23rd of August.[4] The Tweets were commented on angrily by some, who claimed the Trust was presenting the past selectively and trying to force a 'specific view of history on us'.[5] The 'view' of history the Trust was sharing was simply that the Transatlantic Slave Trade had influenced British material culture, and was only selective in the sense that it focused on objects related to the topic being discussed.

[4] National Trust Twitter account, 23 August 2020, Twitter, https://twitter.com/nationaltrust/status/1297429122126422016?lang=en, accessed 1 September 2023.
[5] Emer Scully, 'National Trust Sparks Woke Row After Tweeting About Artefacts and Buildings Linked to Slavery and the British Empire – as Dozens Vow to Cancel Membership over Historical "Virtue Signalling",' *Daily Mail*, 24 August 2020, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8658855/National-Trust-sparks-row-tweeting-buildings-linked-slavery.html, accessed 1 September 2023.

However the Interim Report would similarly be accused of selectivity and bias, despite its specific focus. On the 15th of September 2020, the National Trust published the report, which summarises already-known connections between ninety-three of the Trust's historic properties and colonialism and slavery, ranging from financial ties and political links to specific connections with individuals coming to Britain from different parts of the Empire. The Trust also highlighted objects in its collections produced by enslaved people and others, including sculptures and paintings, which depict Black people. The purpose of the document was to bring together what was already known about this area in order to inform the Trust's work and see where further research might be useful. This was the first time that a list of National Trust properties with links to colonial history had been compiled by the organisation.

The Report was published at the end of a summer defined by the Black Lives Matter protests, but also at a time when the National Trust was under scrutiny for its handling of the Coronavirus crisis, perceived by some as evidence that it was moving in a direction which would prioritise its historic properties less. On 21 August, *The Times* had also reported on a leaked internal strategy document, suggesting that the Trust intended to focus more on its outdoor sites and less on its role as 'a major cultural institution'.[6] *The Times* claimed that the leaked document was a declaration of the Trust's 'intention to "dial down" its role as a big cultural institution and move away from being the custodian of the English country home', with reference to the 'outdated mansion experience', a phrase which would come up repeatedly in media reporting.[7] This came not long after media coverage of the Trust's redundancy consultation, conducted in response to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.[8] The implication was that at the same time that

[6] David Sanderson, 'National Trust to Scrap Its Experts,' *The Times*, 21 August 2020, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/national-trust-to-scrap-its-experts-hdmzlqbhd , accessed 1 September 2023.
[7] David Sanderson, 'National Trust to Focus on Outdoors and Hold Fewer Exhibitions in Properties, Ten-Year Strategy Reveals,' *The Times*, 25 August 2020, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/national-trust-to-focus-on-outdoors-and-hold-fewer-exhibitions-in-properties-ten-year-strategy-reveals-wdsf2cm0b, accessed 1 September 2023.
[8] Jonathan Paige, 'National Trust Sheds 1,200 Staff to Plug £200m losses,' *The Times*, 30 July 2020, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/national-trust-sheds-1-200-staff-to-plug-200m-losses-vvwphkl3h, accessed 1 September 2023.

the Trust was acknowledging ties between its collections and historic slavery, and implicitly criticising Britain's role in the Transatlantic Slave Trade, it was looking to move away from its role as a custodian of national heritage.

The Interim Report was labelled a 'shameful manifesto' by Charles Moore, Baron Etchingham and former editor of *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Spectator*, and *The Sunday Telegraph*, and one of the leading figures in the ongoing media campaign against the Trust.[9] Within a couple of weeks of the Report's publication, the Trust was criticised in the House of Commons by Tom Hunt, Conservative MP for Ipswich, and Jacob Rees-Mogg, Conservative MP for North East Somerset and Leader of the House of Commons (2019-2022), for its inclusion of Winston Churchill, which would become one of the key points of contention about the Report. Rees-Mogg said that the Trust's properties 'were given to it by people who expected it to be a custodian of our history, to be proud of our history and to think well of our great nation', and the Speaker of the House added that 'sometimes it was in lieu of taxes that we got them'.[10] The idea that the tax benefits received by the Trust create an obligation to the public to tell a patriotic or celebratory and whitewashed national history was a common theme in discussions about the Trust in Parliament at this time. Three parliamentary debates took place regarding the National Trust in 2020, in the House of Commons on 11 November and 15 December, and in the House of Lords on 3 December.

In the House of Commons, questions were asked about how much money the National Trust had spent on producing the Interim Report, presumably to suggest that the Trust could have been misusing public money at a time when it was under scrutiny over the redundancies it was making. In each parliamentary debate, it had to be reiterated that the National Trust is independent from the government. In the House of Lords, the impossibly-named Baroness Young of Old Scone

[9] Charles Moore, 'The National Trust's Shameful Manifesto,' *The Spectator,* 24 September 2020, https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/the-national-trusts-shameful-manifesto, accessed 20 September 2021.
[10] HC Debate, 'Business of the House,' 24 September 2020, Vol. 680, Col. 1152, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-09-24/debates/7AE9F785-E4AE-4095-AA5F-D00D9F278BE4/BusinessOfTheHouse?highlight=national%20trust#contribution-7723CD9C-84BD-4C41-8EC6-C64F4246281B, accessed 1 September 2023.

interjected to remind everyone that the Report was simply an audit of the National Trust's properties which it could use to better contextualise its collections, and that the cuts it was making at that time sat within a context of a loss of £200 million in income in 2020.[11] Nigel Huddleston, Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, similarly noted that the Trust was having to draw on its reserves as well as use Government assistance through the furlough scheme at this time and that eighty per cent of its funds are legally restricted.[12] The Trust is a statutory body, and some MPs called for a government investigation into its operations, but Huddleston recommended that the Charity Commission, in its role as regulator, should police it.[13] At no point is the Trust's status as an Independent Research Organisation mentioned in the parliamentary debates. This would surely leave no doubt that commissioning and performing research into its own collections is rightly within its remit, regardless of the fact that research into the histories of its properties is something it has always done and has contributed to its renowned conservation reputation.[14] Few would suggest that the Trust should not use research-informed practices when handling the coastline or animal conservation. What touches a nerve is when its research challenges a rose-tinted view of the national past.

What comes out of reading the parliamentary debates is that the Report was framed as partisan and presented as going against the Trust's mission. The Trust was also accused of creating the Report in response to the Black Lives Matter protests,[15] but it had been commissioned in 2019

[11] HL Debate, 'National Trust Acts,' 3 December 2020, Vol. 808, Col. 821, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2020-12-03/debates/E3497C09-5706-42CC-B02A-84C0CF9EE2C6/NationalTrustActs, accessed 1 September 2023.
[12] HC Deb, 'Future of the National Trust,' 11 November 2020, Vol. 683 Col. 442WH, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-11-11/debates/14F2215E-66AC-4A16-B4E2-4937E24BAC26/FutureOfTheNationalTrust, accessed 1 September 2023.
[13] HC Deb, 'Future of the National Trust,' 11 November 2020, Vol. 683 Col. 441WH.
[14] The National Trust is an Independent Research Organisation recognised by UK Research and Innovation, a status it was awarded in 2019.
[15] Charlie Parker, National Trust Accused of Bias in the Study of Colonial History, *The Times*, 16 December 2020, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9058475/National-Trust-accused-bias-team-investigating-ties-properties-slave-trade.html#:~:text=The%20National%20Trust%20has%20been,the%20slave%20trade%20and%20empire.&text=The%20Colonial%20Countryside%20project%20is,to%20Africa%2C%20the%20Caribbean%20and, accessed 1 October 2023.

and was rooted in the Colonial Countryside project, which started in 2018. In the context of greater political polarisation, the history of the British Empire has become increasingly contested ground, particularly seen in the imperial nostalgia many historians noted was at play in pro-Brexit rhetoric in the lead-up to the 2016 referendum, and this has intensified since the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020.[16] The Common Sense Group, a group of Conservative MPs formed in 2020, signed a letter to *The Telegraph* that November suggesting that the National Trust was 'coloured by cultural Marxist dogma, colloquially known as the woke agenda'[17] and that a 'clique of powerful, privileged liberals' were trying to rewrite British history.[18] This was in keeping with other developments, which had seen the government become increasingly vocal about supposed "culture warriors" seeking to represent the British past unfairly.

Policy Exchange, the influential right-wing think tank, had established the *History Matters* project in June 2020, and has claimed that history is the 'most active front in a new culture war'.[19] The idea that history itself was under attack was most effective in stirring up moral panic about the vandalisation or removal of statues from public spaces, and culminated in the government's "Retain and Explain" policy, which called for custodians of 'heritage assets', such as statues, to keep them in place accompanied by explanation of their historical context when faced with calls for removal.[20] Oliver Dowden, the Culture Secretary, wrote to national museums and galleries in

[16] Stuart Ward and Astrid Rasch (eds.), *Embers of Empire in Brexit Britain* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019); Robert Saunders, "Brexit and Empire: 'Global Britain' and the Myth of Imperial Nostalgia," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 48: 6 (2020), 1140–74; Peter Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021); Hannah Rose Woods, *Rule, Nostalgia: A Backwards History of Britain*, (London: Penguin, 2022),

[17] Cultural Marxism refers to a far-right, anti-Semitic conspiracy theory.

[18] 'Letters to the Editor,' *The Telegraph,* 9 November 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2020/11/09/letterswill-police-break-armistice-day-ceremonies-wednesday/, accessed 10 September 2021.

[19] See Margot Finn, 'Material Turns in British History: IV. Empire in India, Cancel Cultures and the Country House,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31 (2021), 1-21, 6-7.

[20] '"Retain and Explain" Guidance Published to Protect Historic Statues,' Department of Culture, Media and Sport press release, 5 October 2023, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/retain-and-explain-guidance-published-to-protect-historic-statues#:~:text=Press%20release-,'Retain%20and%20explain'%20guidance%20published%20to%20protect%20historic%20statues,in%20their%20care%20or%20ownership.&text=Custodians%20of%20heritage%20assets%20now,for%20their%20removal%20or%20relocation., accessed 20 October 2023.

September 2020, warning them that if they did not act consistently with the government's position on so-called 'contested heritage' they may have their funding pulled, despite their arms-length status.[21] It was also reported that the Colonial Countryside project would receive no further government funding.[22]

Corinne Fowler, who had led the Colonial Countryside project and co-authored the Interim Report, faced sustained reporting targeting her personally, often with false claims about her work, including the Daily Mail's claim that her 2021 book, *Green Unpleasant Land*, described gardening as racist.[23] Fowler received hate mail, including direct threats of violence. In the comments of one *Daily Mail* article someone had written 'the DOTR is coming', an acronym for the phrase 'Day of the Rope' which alludes to the fictional insurrection in the white supremacist William Luther Pierce's 1978 novel *The Turner Diaries*, in which people referred to as 'race traitors' are lynched.[24] Hilary McGrady, the Trust's Director General, also received death threats.[25] Katie Donington has noted the echoes of the white supremacist "great replacement" theory in a video posted on YouTube which suggested that the National Trust was trying to appeal to people of colour 'at the expense of whites' in a 'zero sum game'.[26] These examples illustrate the racist extremism that the rhetoric of newspaper coverage and government interventions about the Trust appeals to. At the same time, claims like the one about gardening reposition the debate from a serious one about addressing how Britian understands its past into one in which researchers are depicted as being

[21] Oliver Dowden, Letter from Culture Secretary on HM Government position on Contested Heritage, 22 September 2020, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/letter-from-culture-secretary-on-hm-government-position-on-contested-heritage, accessed 12 October 2023.
[22] 'Culture Wars in Country Houses: What the National Trust Controversy Tells Us About British History Today,' Legacies of British Slavery Blog, 17 February 2021, retried from: https://lbsatucl.wordpress.com/2021/02/17/culture-wars-in-country-houses-what-the-national-trust-controversy-tells-us-about-british-history-today/, accessed 13 October 2023.
[23] Mark Edmonds, 'Does This Look "Unpleasant"? Academic Signed Up by the National Trust to Lecture Us on the Evils Behind Our Most Glorious Estates says Gardening has its Roots in Racial Injustice,' *Daily Mail*, 16 January 2021, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9153499/Academic-says-GARDENING-roots-racial-injustice.html, accessed 12 October 2023.
[24] Knight, 'Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History'.
[25] Emma Yeomans, 'I've Received Death Threats, says National Trust Boss Hilary McGrady,' *The Times,* 4 January 2022, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ive-received-death-threats-says-national-trust-boss-hilary-mcgrady-swjbc9d69, accessed 12 October 2023.
[26] Katie Donington, 'Whose Heritage? Slavery, Country Houses, and the "Culture Wars" in England,' 151-2.

ridiculous, appealing to a more moderate audience who might be easily be swayed against the Trust's efforts to better account for the histories of its properties. Recognising this, Fowler chose to respond to some of the hate mail she received, despite the serious threats which had been posed to her safety.[27] While acknowledging that she was better placed to safely engage with hate mail than people of colour facing similar attacks would be, Fowler used her visibility and privilege as an opportunity to share her expertise in an attempt to move away from uninformed and increasingly fraught debates.[28]

The idea that the Trust was going outside of its remit by publicising known links between its properties and colonialism and slavery culminated in an investigation by the Charity Regulator. In the end, it turned out that the Charity Commission had only received three complaints about the National Trust between 1 August and 20 October 2020,[29] and it was found not to have broken charity law in March 2021.[30] While the Trust was shown not to have acted outside of its charitable purpose, the newspaper coverage continued. In the past three years, hundreds of articles, many with misleading and false statements about the Trust have been published. Fresh impetus came from Restore Trust, which has articles on its website dating back to August 2020,[31] but began being reported on in the media in April 2021.[32] The Good Law Project, an independent not-for-profit campaign organisation, has investigated Restore Trust, believing its website to be

[27] Corinne Fowler, 'Responding to the "Culture War" through Engagement and Dialogue,' Museums Association, https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/decolonising-museums/inclusive-histories-responding-to-the-culture-war/#, accessed 12 September 2023.
[28] Eleanor Mills, 'Profile: "We Must be Careful Not to Unconsciously Add to the Toxicity",' Museums Association, 14 November 2022, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/people/2022/11/profile-we-must-be-careful-not-to-unconsciously-add-to-the-toxicity/, accessed 12 September 2023.
[29] Stephen Delahunty, 'Regulator Received just Three Complaints about National Trust Slavery Links Report,' *Third Sector,* 23 November 2020, https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/regulator-received-just-three-complaints-national-trust-slavery-links-report/governance/article/1700842, accessed 21 September 2021.
[30] Patrick Butler, 'National Trust Report on Slavery Links Did Not Break Charity Law, Regulator Says,' The Guardian, 11 March 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/mar/11/national-trust-report-uk-slavery-links-did-not-break-charity-law-regulator-says, accessed 15 September 2021.
[31] '"Flexing the Manion Experience" – The Leaked Report,' Restore Trust website, 21 August 2020, https://www.restoretrust.org.uk/restore-trust-issues/ntmansionexperience, accessed 30 August 2023.
[32] Hayley Dixon, 'National Trust Members Launch Campaign to Battle Chairty's "Woke Agenda",' The Telegraph, 2 April 2021, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/04/02/national-trust-members-campaign-group-wants-end-political-agenda/, accessed 21 September 2021.

astroturfed (referring to websites claiming to be grassroots but without transparency on their funding) and potentially collecting, analysing, and using personal data illegally by placing trackers on the browsers of people who visit its website to send data on those visitors to companies like Google, Twitter, and Facebook and retarget them with campaign material through social media.[33] Restore Trust's size at this time is also unclear. On the 3rd of April 2021 it was reported as having 300 supporters[34], but by the 7th it had claimed to be a 'grassroots movement of 6,100 current and former members' organised directly in response to the Trust's Interim Report[35], rising to 10,000 reported in *The Times* by the end of May.[36]

Restore Trust's website is run by RT2021 Limited, a private company based at 55 Tufton Street, the address linked to various think tanks and campaign groups, including Net Zero Watch, a climate change denial group, and the libertarian think tank, the Institute of Economic Affairs.[37] One of Restore Trust's directors is Neil Record, who is also chairman of Net Zero Watch and the Institute of Economic Affairs. Zewditu Gebreyohanes became director of Restore Trust in 2022 and previously worked at the think tank Policy Exchange.[38] Gebreyohanes is also executive editor of History Reclaimed and was appointed as a trustee at the V&A by Nadine Dorries, former Conservative MP and Culture Secretary 2021-2022. The climate change denial and the "anti-woke" attacks on historical research are not dissimilar, given their shared anti-intellectualism and their links to the spreading of misinformation, despite Restore Trust's denial of connections to

[33] 'Atroturfing: Who Can You Trust?' Good Law Project, 11 November 2022, https://goodlawproject.org/astroturfing-who-can-you-trust/, accessed 1 October 2023.
[34] Faith Ridler, 'National Trust Members Launch Campaign Against Charity's "Woke Agenda" as it Accuses it of "Lecturing" the Public and "Demonising" History,' *Daily Mail*, 3 April 2021, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9432351/National-Trust-members-launch-campaign-against-charitys-woke-agenda.html, accessed 21 September 2021.
[35] Stephen Delahunty, 'National Trust "Open to Debate" After Pressure Group Attracts Thousands of Members,' *Third Sector,* 7 April 2021, https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/national-trust-open-debate-pressure-group-attracts-thousands-members/governance/article/1711911, accessed 21 September 2021.
[36] Dominic Kennedy, 'Empire Strikes Back at National Trust,' *The Times,* 29 May 2021, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/empire-strikes-back-at-national-trust-w89qp9xld, accessed 1 August 2023.
[37] 'Success: Restore Trust Caves in to Legal Challenge,' Good Law Project, 13 January 2023, https://goodlawproject.org/update/success-restore-trust-caves-in-to-legal-challenge/, accessed 1 October 2023.
[38] Matthew Lee, 'A Matter of Trust,' *Delayed Gratification*, 5 November 2022, https://www.slow-journalism.com/long-reads/a-matter-of-trust, accessed 15 August 2023.

Tufton Street and claim that they are not transparent about their funding because it comes from individual donations.[39] The criticisms of the National Trust and other heritage institutions working to more explicitly reflect colonial history to their visitors seen in the media feed into broader political polarisation.

In its response to the Trust's *Interim Report*, Restore Trust claimed that there was no evidence that colonial history had been suppressed previously.[40] By April 2021, it suggested that it was the National Trust that was attempting to 'destroy' or 'hide' British history itself, implying a sort of conspiracy.[41] The furore surrounding the Report was also used as an opportunity to raise a range of grievances and accusations against the Trust, with Derek Thomas, Conservative MP for St Ives, raising complaints about the Trust's relationship with its tenants in Cornwall in the Commons debate[42], and in the House of Lords, Lord Bird also raised criticisms coming from individuals renting from the Trust.[43] Nigel Huddleston suggested that allegations about the Trust's communication was poor and that it fails to explain its decisions to tenants and locals or to hear their views are 'familiar' to many MPs.[44] Questions about how the Trust uses its land and works with local communities were weaponised in the wake of the Interim Report's publication to suggest it was an organisation that had lost its way. Andrew Murrison, Conservative MP for Southwest Wiltshire, suggested that 'any reasonable appraisal of the material' in the Report 'would suggest to me and many others a corporate culture at odds with its membership'.[45] The Trust was accused of being both too corporate and too left wing.

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[39] Lee, 'A Matter of Trust'.
[40] 'The Interim Report on Colonialism and Slavery,' Restore Trust website, https://www.restoretrust.org.uk/restore-trust-issues/interimreport, accessed 12 August 2023.
[41] James Bickerton, 'National Trust Members Launch Rebellion against its "Woke Agenda" – "Stop Lecturing Us!",' Express, 3 April 2021, https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1418716/National-Trust-latest-woke-Black-Lives-Matter-racism-colonialism-slavery-Restore-Trust, accessed 1 May 2022.
[42] HC Debate, 'National Trust: 125th Anniversary,' 15 December 2020, Vol. 686, Col. 229, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-12-15/debates/8EA3256E-5B39-4202-A92F-41580DFE1860/NationalTrust125ThAnniversary, accessed 1 September 2023.
[43] HL Debate, 'National Trust Acts,' 3 December 2020, Vol. 808, Col. 822.
[44] HC Debate, 'National Trust: 125th Anniversary,' 15 December 2020, Vol. 686, Col. 238.
[45] HC Deb, 'Future of the National Trust,' 11 November 2020, Vol. 683 Col. 436WH, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-11-11/debates/14F2215E-66AC-4A16-B4E2-4937E24BAC26/FutureOfTheNationalTrust, accessed 1 September 2023.

In 2021, 2022, and 2023 Restore Trust led campaigns to get candidates with its backing elected onto the National Trust's Council. In 2021, Restore Trust put forward six candidates, including Stephen Green, leader of Christian fundamentalist group Christian Voice, who claimed the Trust was 'obsessed with LGBT issues'.[46] Three of the candidates Restore Trust had promoted were elected, but Guy Trehane immediately released a statement distancing himself from the group.[47] In 2022, Restore Trust backed seven candidates, still criticising the Trust's approach to the history of colonialism but also bringing in complaints about the Trust's management more widely. Restore Trust suggested that the Trust had introduced its Quick Vote online system, which allows members to select the Trust's trustees' preferred choices for the council election and members resolutions with one click as a proxy vote, was introduced 'surreptitiously' to rig the voting.[48] In 2023, Restore Trust received backing from Jacob Rees-Mogg and Nigel Farage, former leader of UKIP, and political figures received invitations from Andrew Kennedy, who previously campaigned for Liz Truss and Boris Johnson, to a Restore Trust Whatsapp group.[49] Despite a poll of 2000 adults finding that 71% of people believe the National Trust is a trustworthy institution and is a force for good[50], A spokesperson for the National Trust noted that it was not the only charity facing such political pressure, and highlighted that 'any political campaign to influence the governance of an independent charity would be concerning'.[51]

[46] Ben Quinn, 'Insurgents to Bring War on "Wokeness" to National Trust AGM,' *The Guardian,* 1 October 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/01/insurgents-bring-war-wokeness-national-trust-agm, accessed 5 September 2023.
[47] Vanessa Thorpe and James Tapper, 'National Trust Sees Off Culture War Rebellion in an AGM of Discontent,' *The Guardian*, 30 October 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/30/national-trust-sees-off-culture-war-rebellion-in-an-agm-of-discontent, accessed 10 October 2023.
[48] Robert Booth, 'Right-Leaning Group Fails to Wrest Control of National Trust,' *The Guardian,* 6 November 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/06/right-leaning-group-fails-to-wrest-control-of-national-trust-from-political-takeover, accessed 10 October 2023.
[49] Ben Quinn, 'National Trust Defends Right to Campaign on Nature Amid "Pressure" from Lobby Group,' *The Guardian*, 2 October 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/02/national-trust-defends-right-to-campaign-on-nature-amid-pressure-from-lobby-group, accessed 10 October 2023.
[50] Jack Blackburn, 'National Trust is Building Its Reputation, Poll Shows,' *The Times*, 30 September 2023, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/national-trust-force-for-good-trusted-shared-heritage-nthfdxpmd, accessed 10 October 2023.
[51] Quinn, 'National Trust Defends Right to Campaign on Nature'.

There is a longer history to the current criticism of the National Trust which needs investigating further. In the early 2000s, hunting became a key area of contention for the National Trust, and it seems to have been used to stir controversy in ways which parallel the debates about colonialism today. Foreshadowing the 2020s, in 2001 and 2002 candidates ran in the National Trust council election to try and overturn the Trust's ban on stag hunting on its land.[52] The Trust's 1997 stag hunting ban had followed a research project led by Derek Bateson, an animal behaviour expert at the University of Cambridge, which found that stag hunts using dogs caused extreme suffering and exhaustion for the deer.[53] Since the 1997 decision, the pro-hunt lobby had continued to try and overturn it, but the Trust maintained its choice and continued to allow fox hunting, shooting, and fishing on its land, stating that this would go unchanged unless the government were to alter legislation, arguing that as a charitable body, it was not its place to take a political position on field sports as a whole.[54]

Friends of the National Trust, perhaps a sort of precursor to 2020's Restore Trust, was set up in 1998 to reverse the 1997 ban and selected well-known names to back in the council elections in the hope of drawing supporters, including landowner Hugh Van Cutsem, TV presenter Robin Page, TV chef Clarissa Dickson-Wright, and the right-wing philosopher Roger Scruton.[55] The RSPCA, League Against Cruel Sports, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare campaigned for National Trust members to vote against the pro-hunt candidates. Some of the nominees backed by Friends of the National Trust were also recommended by the National Trust. The MP and grandson of Winston Churchill, Nicholas Soames and Clarissa Dickson Wright were elected to the

[52] Rob Evans, 'Celebrities Rally to Overturn National Trust's Hunting Ban,' *The Guardian*, 4 September 2001, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2001/sep/04/hunting.ruralaffairs, accessed 12 September 2023; Severin Carrell, 'National Trust Accused of Pro-Hunt Bias in Bid to Woo Prince Charles,' *Independent*, 13 October 2002, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/national-trust-accused-of-prohunt-bias-in-bid-to-woo-prince-charles-139936.html, accessed 12 September 2023.
[53] Nicholas Schoon, 'National Trust Drives Out Stag Hunting,' *Independent*, 10 April 1997, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/national-trust-drives-out-stag-hunting-1266382.html
[54] https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2000/oct/07/hunting.ruralaffairs, accessed 12 October 2023.
[55] Severin Carrell, 'National Trust Accused of Pro-Hunt Bias in Bid to Woo Prince Charles,' *Independent*, 13 October 2002, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/national-trust-accused-of-prohunt-bias-in-bid-to-woo-prince-charles-139936.html, accessed 12 September 2023.

council, having received thousands of the Trust's discretionary votes. As a result, the Trust faced criticism for its use of proxy votes in the council election, in which it gave members the option to let the Chairman of the Trust use their vote. Both Soames and Dickson Wright were pro-hunting advocates, and Nicholas Fry, who had run against them unsuccessfully, suggested that they had been chosen by the Trust as a concession to the pro-hunting lobby.[56]

The hunt is an iconic image the English country house as well as of tiger hunting in colonial India and South Africa. Big cat skins and trophies in the form of animal heads seen in country houses reflect the popularity of these sports in the twentieth century, seen, for example, in Trophy Corridor at Kedleston Hall (see Image 10 in the Appendix), and on the walls of Nunnington Hall, in Yorkshire. Hunting has been a repeated point of contention for the Trust since at least 1933, when Lady Corry raised the matter of cruel sports being permitted on Trust land but was ruled out of order by the chairman, Lord Zetland.[57] In 1990, when animal rights activists had attempted to end fox and stag hunting on National Trust land, the Trust's council had argued that to do so might alienate rural communities, creating an antagonistic rather than friendly relationship between the Trust and the countryside population.[58]

The Trust denied that it was trying to appeal to people who were pro-hunt, including Prince Charles, who was already the Trust's vice-chairman and was due to take over as its patron after the Queen Mother, and a good friend of Soames.[59] The Trust argued that individuals elected to the Trust's council were legally required to set aside personal opinions in order to prioritise the Trust's interests.[60] Tim Butler, the Trust's Secretary, also noted that the point of the discretionary proxy vote was that it allowed members to express that they were content with the way the

[56] Lucy Maggs, 'National Trust Comes Under Attack,' *Third Sector*, 13 November 2002, https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/national-trust-comes-attack/article/618857, accessed 30 August 2023.
[57] Cannadine, 'The First Hundred Years,' 27.
[58] David Lowenthal, 'British National Identity and the English Landscape,' *Rural History*, 2:2 (1991), 205-230, 215.
[59] Severin Carell, 'National Trust Accused of Pro-Hunt Bias in Bid to Woo Prince Charles,' *Independent*, 13 October 2002, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/national-trust-accused-of-prohunt-bias-in-bid-to-woo-prince-charles-139936.html, accessed 1 October 2023.
[60] Carell, 'National Trust Accused of Pro-Hunt Bias'.

organisation was being run; without this option, it was likely that only members who are unhappy with the Trust's leadership would vote, skewing the elections and votes on members' resolutions from what the majority of the membership actually wanted.[61] Fry described the Trust's council as 'a self-perpetuating oligarchy'[62], the same phrase used by Conrad Rawnsley to describe the Trust before it restructured in line with the recommendations of the 1968 Benson Report, including the introduction of membership votes for Council members in 1971.[63]

In the late 1980s, Patrick Wright commented that the polarisation around the country house which had taken place since the War – either it was a precious and fundamental part of the nation's heritage facing total destruction that must be preserved in its current form, or it was redundant and should be allowed to disappear completely - was being used by individuals with vested interests. Legitimate criticisms about the extent to which the Trust had sincerely taken on the values of aristocratic ancestral homes were adopted by individuals 'who would like the Trust to get out of the country house for different reasons indeed'.[64] The *Spectator* was praising the fiftieth anniversary of the Trust's country houses scheme while simultaneously suggesting that the Trust was now surplus to requirements and that the houses were 'capable of looking after themselves again', meaning through private ownership.[65] This was echoed in the House of Lords in December 2020, when Lord Moylan, a Conservative politician, similarly suggested that the National Trust has 'something of a national monopoly, at least in the country house market' supported by the state through its endowment of properties in lieu of tax and asked that Baroness Barran, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, agree to assess the benefits of splitting the Trust into two or more organisations 'with a view to encouraging competition and increasing the variety of visitor experience', to which she replied

[61] Maggs, 'National Trust Comes Under Attack'.
[62] Maggs, 'National Trust Comes Under Attack'.
[63] The National Trust Report and Accounts 1971, (London: Design for Print Ltd., 1971), 5.
[64] Patrick Wright in conversation with Tim Putnum, 'Sneering at the Theme Parks: An Encounter with the Heritage Industry', (1989), in Wright, *On Living in an Old Country,* 254.
[65] Wright 'Sneering at the Theme Parks', 255.

she had no plans to do, reiterating that the Trust conducts a governance review once every ten years and that an external review would be for the Charity Commission to undertake.[66]

In 2021, hunting was a key issue of debate again, coinciding with Restore Trust's first year of campaigning in the Trust's council elections. In December 2020, it was reported that the Countryside Alliance was attempting to get the 'right people' into 'key positions' in the National Trust in order to influence its policies.[67] In the Trust's 2021 AGM, the Countryside Alliance recommended its supporters vote against the members' resolution to ban trail hunting on National Trust land.[68] The motion passed, based on arguments that trail hunting – which sees hounds chase a scent that has been laid ahead of the hunt, instead of a real fox and was devised after the 2004 Hunting Act banned foxhunting using dogs – is a smokescreen for illegal foxhunting.[69]

Wright references Roger Scruton as one of the key figures who was arguing with James Lees Milne in the newspapers about the possibility of re-privatising Trust country houses in the 1980s.[70] Scruton described English country houses as 'memorials to the force that maintained English society',[71] and in 2004, not long after he had stood for the National Trust council, he purchased Montpelier, a plantation house in Sperryville, Virginia.[72] Writing in *Country Life* from Virginia, Scruton referenced the material evidence of his estate's history as just another chapter in the history of a house: 'panels and mouldings speak of a tradition of craftsmanship that still lives in

[66] HL Debate, 'National Trust Acts,' 3 December 2020, Vol. 808, Col. 821, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2020-12-03/debates/E3497C09-5706-42CC-B02A-84C0CF9EE2C6/NationalTrustActs, accessed 1 September 2023.
[67] Rupert Evelyn, 'Are the Countryside Alliance Attempting to "Infiltrate" the National Trust?' *ITV News,* https://www.itv.com/news/2020-12-26/are-the-countryside-alliance-attempting-to-infiltrate-the-national-trust, accessed 2 September 2023.
[68] 'Full Guide to Voting at the National Trust AGM,' Countryside Alliance website, 14 October 2021, https://www.countryside-alliance.org/resources/news/full-guide-to-voting-at-the-national-trust-agm, accessed 2 September 2023.
[69] Sarah Marsh, 'National Trust Bans Trail Hunting on Its Land amid Illegal Foxhunt Concerns,' *The Guardian*, 25 November 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/nov/25/national-trust-bans-trail-hunting-on-its-land-amid-foxhunt-concerns, accessed 12 October 2023.
[70] Wright 'Sneering at the Theme Parks,' 255.
[71] Roger Scruton*, England: An Elegy,* (London: Continuum, 2006), 240.
[72] Not to be confused with Montpelier in Orange Country, Virginia, the home and slave plantation of James Madison, the fourth President of the United States.

the neighbourhood, and parchment relics stuffed into the walls include letters from the Civil War and even a slave list-reminder of the price paid for the land of the free'.[73] In the same article, Scruton noted that Americans were incredulous at England's restrictions on hunting, an issue he remained passionate about. Before he died in 2020, Scruton had also mentored Zewditu Gebreyohanes, who became director of Restore Trust two years later.[74]

The Friends of the National Trust group had formed specifically to oppose the Trust's ban on stag hunting, but complaints soon grew into a wider criticism of the way the Trust was operating, ultimately seeing the Trust as a 'metropolitan bureaucracy out of touch with rural opinion'.[75] The characterisation of the National Trust as a bourgeois London-based institution against a conservative, country-based membership again echoes multiple controversies the Trust has gone through over the past thirty years. Fiona Reynolds', Director General of the Trust from 2001-2012, hoped the Trust would shed its 'remote' and 'elitist' image, seen by critics as the 'onset of political correctness'.[76] Criticism coming out of the hunting debate led to an official report on the Trust's governance structures conducted by senior National Trust officials and independent figures. Echoing the 1968 Benson Report, it suggested that the Trust's 'old-fashioned committee system...[had] not kept pace with its remarkable growth' and recommended that the Trust streamline its committees, establish a governing body to act as trustees 'in place of the Council' and replace the proxy vote with a postal vote for members.[77] Similarly to today, criticisms about the Trust's governance and its relationship to members, tenants, and the wider public were conflated with specific issue-based agendas. Friends of the National Trust does not seem to have

[73] Roger Scruton, 'Incredulity in Virginia,' *Country Life*, 3 November 2005, 79.
[74] Matthew Lee, 'A Matter of Trust,' *Delayed Gratification*, 5 November 2022, https://www.slow-journalism.com/long-reads/a-matter-of-trust, accessed 15 August 2023.
[75] Vanessa Houlder, 'Dark cloud of suspicion hangs over National Trust,' *Financial Times,* retrieved from https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/dark-cloud-suspicion-hangs-over-national-trust/docview/249411501/se-2, accessed 15 August 2023.
[76] Houlder, 'Dark cloud of suspicion hangs over National Trust'.
[77] Houlder, 'Dark cloud of suspicion hangs over National Trust'.

had the kind of financial backing that Restore Trust does, but it similarly engaged influential voices to run or vote in council elections based on very specific areas of the Trust's policies.

Trying to Define the National Trust

The debates in 2020 about whether or not the National Trust had strayed from its purpose were not new. From its founding to the introduction of the Country Houses Scheme in the 1930s, the Trust changed, broadening its remit. By the 1960s, it was seen by many as having strayed from its founding ideals, becoming an elitist, aristocratic organisation. In the 1970s it underwent reform following the publication of the Benson Report in 1968, professionalising and seeking to broaden its appeal. In the process, it took on more commercial activities to help draw in more members and help fund its huge preservation efforts, continuing to grow and take on a more corporate image in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 2000s and the 2010s, the Trust approached its country houses more explicitly as museums. Having previously defined them in opposition to museums in the 1940s and 1950s – wanting to maintain their authentic feel as real family homes – the Trust became more honest about its role as curator and began to add more museum-style information panels to contextualise the objects on display, and making interventions to pose questions to visitors about what they were seeing, sometimes by introducing modern art. From the Second World War to today, the Trust has changed in multiple ways, and this has consistently been questioned throughout. Defining the Trust can be difficult, because it is such a large, disparate organisation which does many different things. In this section, I consider how the Trust's commercial activities and its role as a museum have been debated, further contextualising the questions which were raised about its Interim Report in 2020.

From its founding, the National Trust has had a commercial aspect to its work. As Patrick Wright argues, the National Trust produced a 'way out' from the conflict between public interest and private property for the state as the nineteenth century ended.[78] The Trust was created as a

[78] Wright, *On Living in an Old Country,* 47.

private company specifically to be able to purchase property and hold it in the interests of the nation. Despite this being central to its purpose, Octavia Hill famously called for the organisation to have a name which did not include the word 'company' in order to distance it from commercial associations and appeal to people more effectively. In its early years, the Trust's commercial activities were limited, and it remained a small organisation. The price of membership was fixed at ten shillings from 1907 until the 1953 National Trust Act.[79] By the 1930s, the Trust had developed a more systematic approach to publicity, organising lecture tours, a film, and gaining support from the press, particularly *The Times*. The Trust started publishing its magazine as a bulletin in 1932 and by 1935, films showcasing the National Trust's 'principle properties' had been shown at 172 cinemas, which were narrated by S. H. Hammer who also gave many public lectures on behalf of the Trust.[80] The Trust's newsletter went from being published annually to three times a year in 1968 and its List of Properties and Newsletter began to be sold at W.H. Smiths shops.[81] The Trust held the ability to sell refreshments at its sites from the 1907 National Trust Act, but it was only from the 1970s that it began to develop the cafes and shops it is now associated with, as it developed its more corporate image as part of the restructure which took place in line with the Benson Report's recommendations. Its early cafes resembled a church fete according to one reporter, and began to be institutionalised when the Trust hired David Mellor as its catering advisor in 1978.[82] The Trust opened its first shop in 1965 and by 1980 had 135 shops and was exporting products to the United States, along with seventy tea shops and restaurants, and in 1984 a company was created 'to operate the trading activities and covenant its profits to the Trust'.[83] A *Times* article from 1986 suggests that food began to be served at National Trust properties ten

[79] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 115.
[80] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1934-1935, 5.
[81] The National Trust for Places of Historic Interest or Natural Beauty Report 1968-69, 18.
[82] Rosemary Burton, 'Food: A Trust house's real forte,' *The Times*, 25 August 1986, 16, The Times Digital Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/IF0503065683/GDCS?u=oxford&sid=bookmarkGDCS&xid=13ce3481. Accessed 6 November 2021.
[83] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 262-4.

years prior, a period in which it had gone from a 'humble cup of tea and a bun', sold to some visitors by a gardener's wife at Hidcote Manor, to being Britain's largest manufacturer of scones.[84]

The Trust's new commercial activities were resisted by some of its older leadership. When it was suggested that the Trust could begin selling tea towels, the reaction was hostile and a Committee of Taste was established to ensure any merchandise would be of the appropriate standard for the Trust, which did not approve a single item in three years.[85] The first tea towel design sold by the Trust replicated a carpet design at Saltram, a Georgian house in Devon, and soon the Trust was selling the preserves, toiletries, and scarves familiar to any visitor today, using designs from its historic house collections.[86] Edward Fawcett was the Trust's first director of public relations and played a central role in creating its modern image, encouraging extensive advertising, signposting for its properties, the provision of public facilities for visitors, and the creation of its retail outlets.[87] James Lees-Milne saw this as a desecration of the buildings.[88] The Trust had defined the country houses scheme in opposition to enterprises set up by private owners to keep their houses running as much as from museums. For many country house owners, to turn your house into a business went against 'gentlemanly norms'.[89] For some, it would also probably seem a little too new money, and it was typically families that had owned their country estates for less generations that were more likely to give them up or turn to commercial ventures to help fund them in the twentieth century.

However, Lord Montagu, whose family seat was the Beaulieu Estate in Hampshire, saw the Trust as out of touch and hypocritical, pointing out that the Trust was 'undoubtedly, whether it liked it or not, in the "tourist entertainment business"'.[90] Montagu had inherited his barony at the age of

[84] Burton, 'Food: A Trust house's real forte'.
[85] Waterson, *The National Trust*, 177.
[86] Jenkins and James, *From Acorn to Oak Tree,* 262.
[87] Nixon, 'Trouble at the National Trust,' 549-50.
[88] Nixon, 'Trouble at the National Trust', 539.
[89] Ruth Adams, 'The V&A, The Destruction of the Country House and the Creation of "English Heritage",' *Museum & Society,* 11:1 (2013), 1-18, 4.
[90] Nixon, 'Trouble at the National Trust', 539.

two and in adulthood transformed Beaulieu, converting the tradition of public visits to the grounds into a business venture and opening the National Motor Museum in its grounds. In 1976 he published *The Gilt and the Gingerbread: Or How to Live in a Stately Home and Make Money*. Lord Montagu also chaired the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, which soon became English Heritage in 1983, which approached heritage with an explicit aim to use it for profit. This new approach was part of the wider development of the heritage 'industry', as it was termed by Robert Hewison, which saw a proliferation of new museums and a more commercial approach taken by bodies like the Trust.[91] The Trust perhaps drew more criticism than others at this time because it had been born out of socialist ideals and now was embracing a new role which framed its visitors as customers, but the criticism of country house heritage was also being made in the wider context of a stronger country house lobby, representing the interests of private owners and campaigning against inheritance tax in the 1970s in a much more coordinated way than it had in the 1930s, partly through the newly formed Historic Houses Association and the success of the V&A's *Destruction of the Country House* exhibition in 1974.[92]

However, in broadening its approach, the National Trust did appeal to more people, and the growth of the heritage sector in the 1980s, for Raphael Samuel, was also rooted in a much more democratic, community-driven push for history museums and preservation than the heritage 'baiters' allowed for. The country house image of the British past can be a nostalgic, simplistic one, but Samuel suggested that there was no evidence that the country house or *Brideshead Revisited* image of the national past had been made hegemonic by heritage sites.[93] Though this generation's equivalent, *Downton Abbey,* has had a more far-reaching impact, this version of history is certainly not the only one people have access to. Moreover, Samuel argued that people do not consume images of the past like they do 'chocolate bars' (or scones!); whatever message is being conveyed through the representation of the national past at heritage sites is not simply passively taken in.[94]

[91] Hewison, *The Heritage Industry*.
[92] Mandler*, Fall and Rise of the Stately Home*.
[93] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 281.
[94] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 271.

On this, Wright agrees, suggesting that no analysis which relies on defining the public as passive in this way can stand up to any scrutiny.[95] Moreover, criticism of the commodified past can rely on a sense that academic history represents a superior, objective version of the past distinguished from people's lived experiences. While historians may not 'prettify' the past in the ways the National Trust and English Heritage do, they certainly package the past into a story to make sense of it.[96] As Wright acknowledged in 2003, there had been 'too much easy sneering at theme parks' from critics of the heritage sector.[97] While heritage organisations can present a simplified or misleading vision of the past, they do not inherently do so. These criticisms of the Trust becoming too commercial remain live today. Cornelia van der Poll, one of Restore Trust's founders,[98] has suggested that Restore Trust is as frustrated by the Trust's commercialism as they are with its supposed decline in expertise, and often the two are presented as being hand in hand.[99] In 2006, some of the participants in Laurajane Smith's survey of county house visitors expressed their commitment to country house visiting and derided those who choose not to spend their free time in this way, with one person saying that most people 'would rather go shopping', and that heritage 'doesn't mean a thing' to them.[100] These comments call back to the convictions of the early country houses scheme, that the Trust should present the country house in a supposedly untainted way.

In this vein, critics of the National Trust suggested that in 2020 it had deviated from its charitable purposes based on a narrow interpretation of what the Trust's role is. This interpretation defined the National Trust almost solely in terms of preservation, with an understanding that to preserve a building and its contents means to keep them unchanged forever. Sir John Hayes, chair of the

[95] Patrick Wright, On Living in An Old Country, 5.
[96] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 271.
[97] Patrick Wright, 'Restoration Tragedy,' *The Guardian*, 13 September 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2003/sep/13/heritage, accessed 9 October 2023.
[98] Alexander Morrison, 'Director of Restore Trust, Campaign Group Putting Pressure on National Trust, Steps Down from Role,' *The Art Newspaper,* 15 November 2023, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/11/15/director-of-restore-trust-campaign-group-putting-pressure-on-national-trust-steps-down-from-role, accessed 17 November 2023.
[99] Cornelia van der Poll, 'Letter: National Trust Requires Historical Rigour and Cake,' *Financial Times*, 29 October 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/bb90c19c-bcb1-402c-8f21-8975209d7e1b, accessed 17 November 2023.
[100] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 153.

Common Sense Group of MPs, selectively quoted the National Trust Act of 1907,[101] saying that its charitable purpose is to 'look after places of beauty' with no reference to places of 'historic interest'.[102] This focus on beauty gets away from the idea that the Trust is telling any kind of story through its properties. From the beginning of the Country Houses Scheme in 1936, the focus of the National Trust's country houses has been aesthetics, which has contributed to a lack of historical context in many of the Trust's buildings. The story of the houses was centred on the collections and stylistic choices of the families who had lived in them with limited historical reference points, other than the achievements of notable family members. To represent the National Trust's purpose as solely preservation with no attempt to understand the histories of the places it owns points to a wider perception that preservation organisations and museums can and should present the buildings and objects they own neutrally.

The Trust identifies itself as neutral in terms of party politics, which helps it to maintain its broad appeal, but the notion that it should not take a position on any issue is impossible and belies the history of the organisation. The National Trust was founded to serve particular causes, most obviously through its origins in the movement to protect common land and public access to open space; this is not a neutral position. The Country Houses Scheme was very different to the Trust's early preservation efforts and served different interests. This does not suggest that the Trust neutrally preserves anything that anyone suggests it should, but that it makes choices according to the context and reasoning behind the case to preserve something, and according to its own priorities at any given time. The Country Houses Scheme, while attracting supporters from left and right, clearly did serve the interests of the growing country houses lobby. The Trust has always been political, and that politics has changed over time; we are now in a period in which the Trust is seeking to become more representative of the nation, and to do greater justice to the

[101] The 1907 National Trust Act defines the National Trust's purposes as the promotion of: 'the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of lands and tenements (including buildings) of beauty or historic interest and as regards lands for the preservation (so far as practicable) of their natural aspect features and animal and plant life'. National Trust Act 1907. Available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Edw7/7/136/enacted, accessed 11 September 2023.
[102] Donington, 'Whose Heritage? Slavery, Country Houses, and the "Culture Wars" in England,' 153.

histories it has previously sidelined and downplayed. Preservation on its own is no more 'neutral' than museum interpretation.[103] As this thesis has shown, throughout its history the Trust's choices about the history it told, and who it was for, were shaped by the context of British colonialism. Inherently, the Trust is selective in choosing what to preserve and how. The National Trust's work is inherently broad and it can be difficult to define exactly what its role is. As the Trust has grown since the 1970s, there have been repeated debates about what it should and should not do, and what its purpose ultimately is in relation to historic buildings.

Another argument about National Trust's historic properties is the idea that they are not museums. A key argument of the country houses scheme was that it would not turn homes into museums, but inherently that is what it did. A museum, by definition, is a building in which objects of some historical or other significance are kept. A large part of the justification for country house preservation was the collections associated with them, and the 1937 National Trust Act expanded the Trust's remit to include the preservation of buildings of national, architectural, historic or artistic interest; of furniture, pictures, and chattels 'of any description' of national, historic, or artistic interest; and to provide the public with access to and enjoyment of those buildings, places and chattels.[104] If National Trust houses are distinct from other historic house museums, it is unclear how this is so. Jeffrey Haworth, a former Historic Buildings Representative and Curator for the National Trust, wrote a piece for Restore Trust's website explaining that the Trust had decided twenty years ago to register each of the historic houses it owns and opens to the public as a museum. Haworth states that he had been concerned that registering houses as museums

[103] Gretchen Jennings, 'The Idea of Museum Neutrality: Where Did it Come From?' *Museum Commons*, 26 June 2017, https://museumcommons.com/2017/06/__trashed.html, accessed 3 October 2023; Anabel Roque Rodriguez, 'Museums Are Not Neutral,' blog post, 12 September 2017, https://www.anabelroro.com/blog/museums-are-not-neutral, accessed 3 October 2023; La Tanya Autry and Mike Murawski, 'Museums Are Not Neutral: We Are Stronger Together,' *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art*, 5:2 (2019).

[104] National Trust Act 1937, available from: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukla/Edw8and1Geo6/1/57/enacted, accessed 11 September 2023.

would lead to 'misunderstandings', and he believes that this has happened.[105] Rather than museum status meaning that the Trust would simply gain further tax benefits – being able to receive historic objects accepted by HMRC in lieu of inheritance tax – and become eligible for state aid, which Haworth suggests was at the core of the Trust's motivation, the Trust increasingly employed people with museums experience and used their expertise to inform its plans for collections management and interpretation. For traditionalists like Haworth, this was inappropriate, as the National Trust intended to make its stately homes 'not to resemble museums in any way'.[106] The distinction seems unclear; the advocates for the National Trust house not to be seen as a museum want the country house to have all the benefits of being a museum, and to care for buildings and collections to the standard a museum would, and even to be officially registered as a museum, but not to be a museum in spirit.

Since at least the 1980s, *The Spectator* has continued to make the case against country houses being turned into museums, and more importantly, losing their associations with their ancestral families, claiming that the country house 'obviously loses its point when it ceases to be the seat of a great county family and becomes merely a museum'.[107] The focus on an "authentic" atmosphere over excessive signage and museum-style labels which was first promoted by the National Trust in its country houses was partly about educating people in artistic taste. One curator I spoke with noted that for lots of people there is a sense that these spaces should be exclusive as they are fundamentally about elite aesthetics and they take pride in their knowledge of art and architecture. For those people, the Trust has been somewhere they could 'feel really good' about how much they knew 'because no one was going to give you the answers' like they would in a museum label.[108] The curator also noted that a National Trust property is the kind of environment

[105] Jeffrey Haworth, 'How it came about that the spirit of the National Trust's Historic Houses is Being Damaged,' Restore Trust website, https://www.restoretrust.org.uk/restore-trust-issues/how-it-came-about-that-the-spirit-of-the-national-trusts-historic-houses-is-being-damaged, accessed 1 September 2023.
[106] Haworth, 'How it came about that the spirit of the National Trust's Historic Houses is Being Damaged'.
[107] John Martin Robinson, 'Country Houses: Holding the Bridge for Fifty Years,' *The Spectator*, 18 April 1987, 36.
[108] Interview with National Trust Curator, 31 May 2022.

that makes you feel like you're in the past'.[109] This idea that a visitor is *experiencing* the past and soaking up atmosphere and enjoying seeing beautiful, historic things without really engaging with their wider histories in too much detail, as opposed to in a traditional museum, where the objects on display are contextualised by labels, rather than period surroundings. The resistance to the National Trust moving away from the "traditional" country house experience is about preference, but it also seems, given the context of what Restore Trust is saying, to be about successfully resisting the push for more critical histories of the Trust's collections. By insisting that the objects speak for themselves, the argument is made that people do not need context and that to add labels is to patronise visitors.

Trying to dissect why the 2020 Report garnered so much attention, the curators I spoke with also emphasised that National Trust houses are often distinguished from museums and emphasised that curatorial roles are more advisory and hands-off within the Trust compared to a traditional museum. Many of the Trust's curators work at a regional or national level, rather than working on one house, and individuals in charge of a property are responsible for different aspects of it, with more of a conservation focus. One curator suggested that it was only now that the Trust had come to see itself as being more like a museum over the past couple of decades that it had gained a sense that it was telling stories about its properties to visitors.[110] The houses were presented as accurately as possible to look as they would have as family homes, without labels or signage to interrupt the atmosphere, and this was only beginning to change around the 1990s and 2000s. However, the curator conceded that prior to the Trust's explicit adoption of museum practices, it was still presenting visitors with historic narratives, through guidebooks, for example, and that these were the ones that came with the houses, meaning the stories that donors told, who often advised and had input in the writing of guidebooks as well as the presentation of the houses when the Trust first began taking them on. As a result, the National Trust has told a very sympathetic history of landowners though its country houses, and the influence of former owners is key to

[109] Interview with National Trust Curator, 31 May 2022.
[110] Interview with National Trust Curator, 16 August 2022.

this, but so is the belief that the county house presented "as it was" is a neutral representation of the past. As the Trust continues to change its practices and introduce more critical elements of the houses' histories, it is becoming more honest. The Trust is not imposing a narrative onto the visitor by adding more context; it was always telling a story visually. In this traditional way of presenting the houses, with minimal interpretation, what was it that the Trust was preserving? And by moving towards a more critical story of the country house, what might it allow to erode?

A lot of the questions posed about the Trust around access vs preservation and education vs entertainment become false dichotomies. It is not either or, but for decades this has been the framing. If the Trust's role is to help prolong the existence of a family seat, then the 1950s argument might hold, but it seems clear that this is not what the Trust's purpose is supposed to be. The National Trust has a duty to be honest about the histories of its country houses and to make them accessible to the public as a whole. By publishing the Interim Report, the Trust was clearly serving its purpose, and actually bringing the organisation more in line with it. Relatedly, the problem with the commercial element of the Trust's work seems to be most problematic when it interferes with an ability to be truthful about the past. As Corinne Fowler puts it, 'history easily becomes confused with public relations' when an organisation like the Trust is trying to ensure paying visitors will visit again, which she suggests is why many heritage sites have typically withheld information about topics like colonialism to avoid alienating them.[111] Yet by ignoring those topics, the Trust already alienates many.

Causing Offence?

Part of the problem the National Trust faces in trying to tell more critical histories and recentre the histories of marginalised groups in the stories it tells about its properties, is that this is not what is expected of the Trust. It seems that whenever the Trust seeks to deviate from its existing narrative of the national past, a patriotic story of great men, and the occasional woman, it is met

[111] Fowler, *Green Unpleasant Land*, 32.

with backlash from its volunteers and members, and in the right-wing press. The Trust is disproportionately white and middle class, and has been saying for at least the past twenty years that it wants to be more representative of the nation it seeks to serve. This section argues that the repeated controversies about the Trust telling history differently are a distraction from the actual problems at hand. Instead of worrying about how best to represent the history of slavery, for example, the question becomes whether the Trust should talk about slavery at all.

Described by the National Trust as a pilot programme, *Challenging Histories* saw a series of exhibitions and events centred on one theme each year from 2017 to 2019.[112] The first year was named *Prejudice and Pride* (2017) and focused on LGBTQ heritage and marked fifty years since the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which partially decriminalised homosexuality. The Trust highlighted twenty-five of its properties as places that had been 'home to, and shaped by, people who challenged conventional ideas of gender and sexuality'.[113] This was followed by *Women and Power* (2018), which marked the centenary of women gaining the vote in the UK. The programming focused on the campaign for suffrage, offering examples of individuals connected to Trust houses who had fought for women to have the vote, such as Emily Massingberd and Laura McLaren and those who had opposed women's suffrage, namely Lord Curzon, who was president of the National League for Opposing Woman's Suffrage, as well as Octavia Hill, despite her public career.[114] In 2019, *People's Landscapes* marked the 200th anniversary of the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester, when cavalry charged at a crowd, killing eighteen people at a protest for parliamentary representation. Commemorating the anniversary was used as a starting point to explore a range of places linked to political themes of protest, democracy, and trade unionism. A fourth year, focused on the history of the British Empire was scheduled but did not take place. However, new interpretative materials, events, and exhibitions centred on British colonial history

[112] 'Challenging Histories Public Programme 2017-19,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/our-cause/history-heritage/challenging-histories-public-programme-2017-19, accessed 1 September 2023.
[113] 'Challenging Histories,' National Trust website.
[114] 'Challenging Histories,' National Trust website.

were created and continue to be developed, such as the *What a World!* exhibition at Penhryn Castle in Wales in 2019.

People's Landscapes was described as 'politically correct nonsense' and evidence that the Trust was 'kow-towing to left-wing populism' by Robin Page, who had stood for election to the National Trust council back in 2002 with the backing of Friends of the National Trust.[115] During *Prejudice and Pride*, the Trust's staff and volunteers took part in a training programme about LGBTQ history and a conference was held in spring 2018, and the University of Leicester's Research Centre for Museums and Galleries collaborated with the Trust on its programming.[116] Once again, the Trust's ability to manage its collections was questioned.[117] The Trust's actions at Felbrigg Hall were widely criticised and reported. The descendants of the former owner of Felbrigg Hall, Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer (1906-1969), previously presented by the Trust as a 'bachelor squire', for outing him as gay in a film, raising the broader ethical questions about how to tell the histories of LGBT people, though the researchers involved in the project emphasised that his sexuality had been known to many of his contemporaries.[118] At Felbrigg the Trust also backtracked after it was widely reported that it had told volunteers they had to wear rainbow lanyards to show their support for pride.[119]

In 2023, *Everywhere and Nowhere*, another collaboration between the Trust and the University of Leicester, took a similar approach to the previous programmes. This project focused on histories of disability in National Trust properties and Collections and explicitly raised the 'gaps and

[115] Jack Malvern, 'Banners Unfurled! National Trust's Year of Protest,' *The Times*, 18 January 2019, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/banners-unfurled-national-trust-s-year-of-protest-dgsgr3zzt, accessed 1 September 2023.
[116] 'Challenging Histories,' National Trust website.
[117] Mitchell*, Imperial Nostalgia,* 77.
[118] Sarah Knapton, 'The National Trust "Outs" Norfolk Squire as Gay 48 Years after His Death,' *The Telegraph,* 21 July 2017, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2017/07/21/national-trust-outs-norfolk-squire-gay-48-years-death/, accessed 1 September 2023.
[119] Jamie Grierson, 'National Trust Reverses Decision Enforcing Use of Gay Pride Badges,' *The Guardian,* 5 August 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/aug/05/national-trust-reverses-decision-on-gay-pride-badges, accessed 1 September 2023.

omissions' in the narratives told by cultural institutions like the Trust.[120] The framing of these histories as 'challenging' perhaps reflects the difficulty in finding the perspectives of marginalised people in official records and the Trust's own archives. The name also might suggest that these histories present a challenge to the Trust itself as an influential body that has contributed to an exclusive vision of the national past populated by "great men" – often landowners, statesmen, and writers - with the odd great woman included. However, part of the problem with these efforts is that these histories are easily presented, particularly given the Trust's audience, as "other" or as though they exist in silos. These programmes mark a start in an important shift for the National Trust towards a less exclusive and more accurate vision of the past. The challenge is to truly incorporate these into its permanent displays and interpretation, rather than continuing its historic approach of temporary exhibitions and interventions, as seen with the exhibitions relating to India at Kedleston Hall.

In January 2023, following the publication of a short documentary as part of the Everywhere and Nowhere project, the Trust was accused of 'deciding' that Henry VIII had a disability.[121] The false charge of anachronism is seen across criticisms of the Trust, and more broadly in arguments about representations of the past, such as when the actor and right-wing commentator Laurence Fox, who launched a new political party, Reclaim, in the same year, apologised after complaining about the appearance of a Sikh soldier in the 2019 film *1917,* set during World War One. Fox, who had described the casting as 'odd' despite the hundreds of thousands of Sikh soldiers in the British Indian Army, suggested that while it was 'great' and 'brilliant' to see, it meant that as a viewer watching the film 'you're suddenly aware there were Sikhs fighting in this war' and that this created a feeling that he was being diverted from 'what the story is', instead being forced to

[120] 'Revealing Previously Untold Stories of Disability,' Everywhere and Nowhere website, https://everywhereandnowhere.le.ac.uk/about/, accessed 1 September 2023.
[121] Jack Blackburn, 'Henry VIII was Disabled, National Trust Decides,' *The Times*, 17 January 2023, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/henry-viii-was-disabled-national-trust-decides-mwphxqm2k#:~:text=However%2C%20his%20disability%20came%20about,accident%20when%20he%20was%2044.&text=While%20jousting%20in%20January%201536,health%20and%20triggering%20his%20obesity., accessed 14 August 2023.

recognise diversity.[122] Hannah Woods describes the 'continual furores' over ethnically diverse casting in period dramas as being 'are fuelled by the instinctive convictions of a section of the British public that its history is and should be *white'*.[123] The same thing is seen in the controversy surrounding the National Trust.

During each of the *Challenging Histories* programmes, the Trust received backlash, but of course also had support from people who think the telling of these stories at the Trust is long overdue. One of the National Trust curators I interviewed noted that the Trust had anticipated 'aggression' in response to the release of the Interim Report because of its prior experiences, emphasising that these controversies remain 'very present' for the Trust, impacting its 'appetite for risk'.[124] This is concerning as it does suggest that negative media coverage is effective in lowering the Trust's willingness and confidence to do work that it believes could cause similar controversy in the future. In the Interim Report, the authors seemingly anticipated some of the accusations they would face, as they write that in documenting the history of colonialism, they are not accusing anyone reading it of anything or attempting to make them feel any particular way, stating that 'no one alive today is responsible for the iniquities of the period in question and consequently, we should feel confident in acknowledging the positive and the negative factual evidence of the past as part of our shared histories'.[125] In simply acknowledging what happened, the Trust's Report is clearly not accusatory. However, the need to address these histories *is* the responsibility of people living in the present. Relatedly, the Report also offered readers reassurance that 'histories of slavery, legacies of colonialism and the lives of people of colour are not the only stories that we will tell', promising to continue highlighting 'the histories of place, architecture, families, estates,

[122] 'Laurence Fox Apologises to Sikhs for "Clumsy" 1917 Comments,' *BBC News,* 24 January 2020, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-51233734, accessed 15 August 2023. Fox himself starred in the country house period piece *Gosford Park*, and his father James in *The Remains of the Day* and *Downton Abbey*, so his own family have contributed to some of the key images of country house life in popular culture.
[123] Hannah Rose Woods, *Rule, Nostalgia: A Backwards History of Britain*, (London: Penguin, 2022), 27.
[124] Interview with National Trust Curator, 31 May 2022.
[125] Sally-Anne Huxtable, Tarnya Cooper, and John Orna-Ornstein, 'Introduction,' in Sally-Anne Huxtable, Corinne Fowler, Christo Kefalas, and Emma Slocombe (eds.), *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery*, National Trust, (2020), 6.

staff, communities, artisanal practice and our remarkable collections told from a variety of perspectives'.[126] The notion that these histories are separate in the first place is problematic, and in reality it is not possible to accurately discuss the histories of design and craftmanship without the context of colonialism's influence on them.

As one curator emphasised, a wider shift has already taken place, with younger generations in particular already knowing and expecting to hear about colonial history.[127] Similarly, one curator highlighted that negative reactions are simply more memorable than good ones, especially because the Trust lacks the level of evaluation needed to really understand how its work is being received by visitors. If something is criticised, that is much more likely to be escalated in a way that positive feedback is not.[128] The reality, though, is that increasingly people do want to know more about these histories, just like they wanted to know more about the lives of servants before the kitchens were opened up previously. Eilidh Auckland, Property Curator for Dyrham Park, suggested that 'it was kind of as if the Trust had never spoken about Empire before and that's not really the case', emphasising that this goes back to the work done around the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 2007, though this has been limited.[129] One curator suggested that in a few years a lot of the things the National Trust is currently struggling with will become normalised and accepted but right now it feels like shock waves.[130] What was implicitly understood in many of the curators' comments, was that the Trust is responsible for making these things shocking by not being honest about them previously. Fiona Bridges, General Manager at Kedleston Hall, has noted that the 'challenge' about the sensitive and controversial histories that the Trust is now beginning to deal with more honestly 'is how can we make this part of what you expect at the National Trust'.[131] One of the curators I interviewed also described the Trust as

[126] Huxtable, Cooper, and Orna-Ornstein, 'Introduction,' 5.
[127] Interview with National Trust Curator, 23 June 2022.
[128] Interview with National Trust Curator, 31 May 2022.
[129] Interview with Eilidh Auckland, 28 June 2022.
[130] Interview with National Trust Curator, 16 August 2022.
[131] Isabella Silvers, 'Kedleston Hall: Exhibition Reclaiming a Colonial National Trust Collection Marks a "Shift" for the Charity,' *Country Living,* 4 June 2023, https://www.countryliving.com/uk/news/a43907479/kedleston-hall-exhibition-national-trust-my-adornment-is-my-power/, accessed 16 September 2023.

struggling to find the correct tone[132], perhaps in part because for so long it adopted the voice of the former owners of the houses.

In 2003, the Trust's annual report had recognised the irony of its failure to gain members from minority ethnic backgrounds or who were on lower incomes, given its founders' progressive aims.[133] This remains something which the Trust is self-conscious about. 99% of the country house visitors surveyed in Laurajane Smith's study self-identified as white British, reflected just how white these spaces tend to be.[134] The National Trust's membership has grown hugely throughout the past twenty years, reaching 5 million in 2017.[135] Helen Ghosh, Director General 2012-2018 suggested in 2014 that, counter to the widely held perception that the Trust is staunchly middle-class, in reality anyone who meets the people visiting a Trust property will find they are 'a very wide range of people'.[136] Yet a 2011 survey found that National Trust volunteers are more likely to be white and middle class than the formal volunteer population and the general population of England and Wales[137], and in 2020 only 3% of the Trust's workforce were people of minoritised ethnicities.[138]

As Rachel Cooke wrote after speaking to Ghosh in 2016, it seems nobody worries about the Trust being too middle class as much as it does.[139] It is something that its director generals and chairmen and women have been talking about for decades. Fiona Reynolds was the Trust's

[132] Interview with National Trust Curator, 23 June 2022.
[133] Peter Hetherington, 'Bourgeois Image Haunts National Trust,' *The Guardian,* 6 September 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2003/sep/06/artsandhumanities.arts, accessed 16 September 2023.
[134] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 130.
[135] 'The History of the National Trust,' National Trust website, https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/the-history-of-the-national-trust, accessed 20 September 2023.
[136] Anna Bawden, 'National Trust Chief: "We Must Focus on Things that Make a Difference",' *The Guardian*, 29 April 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/apr/29/national-trust-helen-ghosh-preservation-campaigning-fracking, accessed 20 September 2023.
[137] Naomi Harflett, '"Bringing Them with Personal Interests": The Role of Cultural Capital in Explaining Who Volunteers,' *Voluntary Sector Review*, 6:1 (2015), 3-19, 4.
[138] Martin Fletcher, 'It's Not a Great Time for the National Trust to have a 125th Birthday,' *The Telegraph*, 9 August 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardens-to-visit/not-great-time-national-trust-have-125th-birthday/, accessed 20 September 2023.
[139] Rachel Cooke, 'The Challenge is to Provide for Everyone": The National Trust Under Fire,' *The Guardian*, 13 November 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/13/challenge-provide-everyone-national-trust-under-fire-heritage-thorneythwaite, accessed 20 September 2023.

Director General from 2001 to 2012 and set about introducing a modernising, more progressive agenda for the charity,[140] and her aim to rework the vision of the Trust's founders for a modern setting has been described as similar to the language of New Labour.[141] Simon Jenkins, Chairman of the Trust 2008-2014, saw the Trust's approach to its houses as too 'stuffy', and implemented the 'Bringing Houses to Life' project to try and combat the Trust's image.[142] Hilary McGrady, the Trust's current Director General since 2018, was seen as patronising by some when she said that she wanted to appeal to more people living in cities, but seemed to suggest that people from places like Birmingham do not appreciate country houses.[143] Her emphasis has been on the idea that different communities want different things from the National Trust and that that is fine, but McGrady also acknowledges that when she joined the Trust in 2018 it 'wasn't an organisation that feels necessarily for everybody' and that it still is not there yet as of 2022.[144] Ghosh suggested in 2014 that the Trust needed to work to make its country houses easier to enjoy.[145] What it is that the Trust thinks makes it difficult to enjoy country houses is unclear and does not seem to have been acknowledged or addressed, though both Ghosh and McGrady have distinguished between the Trust's historic houses and its nature conservation, suggesting that the latter has a wider appeal.[146]

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[140] Peter Hetherington, 'Bourgeois Image Haunts National Trust,' *The Guardian,* 6 September 2003, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2003/sep/06/artsandhumanities.arts, accessed 30 August 2023.
[141] Hetherington, 'Bourgeois Image Haunts National Trust'.
[142] 'National Trust Accused of "Disneyfication" over new "More Accessible" Approach,' *Daily Mail,* 1 November 2010, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/article-1325569/National-Trust-looks-Disney-chairman-Simon-Jenkins-enflames-critics.html, accessed 10 September 2023.
[143] 'New National Trust Boss Sparks New Row after Declaring She Wants to "Appeal to People from Birmingham,' *Daily Mail*, 1 April 2018, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5640711/New-National-Trust-boss-sparks-new-row.html, accessed 10 September 2023.
[144] Harriet Sherwood, 'National Trust Boss Says She Received Death Threats amid "Woke" Row,' *The Guardian*, 3 January 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jan/03/national-trust-boss-says-she-received-death-threats-woke-row, accessed 15 September 2023.
[145] Anna Bawden, 'National Trust Chief: "We Must Focus on Things that Make a Difference",' *The Guardian*, 29 April 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/apr/29/national-trust-helen-ghosh-preservation-campaigning-fracking, accessed 20 September 2023.
[146] Christopher Hope, 'National Trust to Add Land not Stately Homes to lose Middle Class Tag,' *The Telegraph*, 23 March 2015, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11490720/National-Trust-to-add-land-not-stately-homes-to-lose-middle-class-tag.html, accessed 21 September 2023; Geraldine Kendall Adams, 'Profile: "I fel Crystal Clear on What We're Doing and Why We're Doing It",' *Museums Journal,* 21 June 2023, https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/people/2023/06/profile-i-feel-crystal-clear-on-what-were-doing-and-why-were-doing-it/, accessed 21 September 2023.

Each time a new Director General or Chairman comes in, they comment on the perception that the Trust's membership is overly middle class, but there seems to be little explicit discussion about why this is, or any big changes made to diversify the Trust's own workforce or think really fundamentally about how it represents the past to its visitors, or even how it markets itself and prices entry to its historic properties. In the Trust's Inclusion and Diversity document, it states that it will diversify its supporter base by using 'diverse, inclusive content that suits new and existing supporters', and mentions changing its brand guidelines, including tone of voice and imagery.[147] Who is advising the Trust on these changes and how and when they will be implemented is unclear from this document, though it states that a brand tracker will be used to 'identify the percentage of the population who claim to have recently supported the Trust either through visiting, being a member or making a donation. Each region and country will identify specific target demographics and gradually evolve their approaches to growing support for the Trust'.[148] More specifically, the Trust has invested £2.315 million in improving access to its properties for disabled people, including the addition of ramps and mobility vehicles, and has worked with partner organisations to organise outdoor events like walks for LGBTQ+ people in Wales and a Ramadan hike with the Muslim Hikers group.[149]

One problem with the Trust's approach is the conflation of the issues of diversifying the Trust's membership, better representing the whole population through the histories told through its properties, and properly addressing the histories that it has previously obscured and marginalised. Ahead of the publication of the *Interim Report* in 2020, McGrady stated that 'for years' the Trust has been 'fairly euphamistic' about links between its properties and colonialism, also stating the need to diversify the Trust's workforce and her desire to bring in more minority

[147] 'Inclusion and Diversity at the National Trust,' accessible from: https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/who-we-are/about-us/our-commitment-to-inclusion-and-diversity, accessed 21 September 2023.
[148] 'Inclusion and Diversity at the National Trust,' 9.
[149] 'Inclusion and Diversity at the National Trust,' 7.

ethnic visitors.[150] Clearly, these goals are related, but too often the Trust seems to slip into equating "reaching new audiences" with telling the histories of colonialism, implying that this is the way to attract Black communities and further grow the Trust, rather than simply the right thing to do. This is problematic in multiple ways. It falls into the trap the Trust often seems to with other minoritised groups, suggesting that industrial history is for working-class people, as seen in McGrady's comments about Birmingham above. It also mistakes the history of the British Empire as the history of people racialised as non-white; evidently from this thesis, the Trust has told a history of Empire centred on the accomplishments of white individuals since its founding. The reason for talking about these histories seems to be driven by growth and relevancy, rather than by a sense that these histories must be told, and that it is crucial for white Britons to learn the history of colonialism themselves.

The fact that the Trust is known to be a particularly white, middle-class institution has contributed to the hostility it faces when it tries to change the way it tells the histories of its properties. In 2017, Ghosh suggested that the Trust had 'alienated traditional members' through repeated controversy in its attempts to diversify its membership.[151] In Sunaya Kassim's essay of the same year, 'The Museum Will Not Be Decolonised', she describes working as part of a group of co-curators with Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery on its 2017-8 exhibition *The Past Is Now,* reinterpreting its collections in relation to British colonialism.[152] Kassim was honest about the tension between the co-curators, who were all women of colour, and the museum staff, who were aware of colonial history and its continued impact in the present 'in theory' but 'had, perhaps, never been confronted' about the role of museums, and therefore their own roles, in perpetuating celebratory narratives of imperialism and the misrepresentation of colonial history in the present.

[150] Martin Fletcher, 'It's Not a Great Time for the National Trust to have a 125th Birthday,' *The Telegraph*, 9 August 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/gardens-to-visit/not-great-time-national-trust-have-125th-birthday/, accessed 20 September 2023.
[151] Fletcher, 'It's Not a Great Time for the National Trust to have a 125th Birthday'.
[152] Sunaya Kassim, 'The Museum Will Not Be Decolonised', *Media Diversified,* 15 November 2017, https://mediadiversified.org/2017/11/15/the-museum-will-not-be-decolonised/, accessed 11 September 2023.

As a result, for the co-curators the project entailed 'managing other people's emotions' as well as their own. At the National Trust, this effect is multiplied by the pressure of answering to the direct descendants of those whose histories it is telling – who often live next door - and to its membership. Restore Trust's claim that it is a grassroots group of members, and its targeting of council elections, plays on this. This was certainly seen in newspaper editors looking for reports on the National Trust that would stir up anger, as seen with headlines suggesting that the Trust was vilifying Britain's heroes rather than doing its 'job' by conserving 'our' history,[153] and claiming that the Colonial Countryside project involved children being asked to 'condemn British history',[154] and that the Trust was 'forcing' diversity training on its volunteers.[155]

Repeatedly, the Trust was said to have offended people by publishing the Interim Report in 2020. In the House of Commons, Huddleston conceded that they understood the Trust's intentions in reviewing its historic houses in this way 'especially in this time of heightened awareness of discrimination' but suggested that it had done it in an 'unfortunate way' and had unintentionally caused offence 'for many people', meaning the Trust needed to 'reflect on that and learn from it'.[156] In the House of Lords, Baroness Barran reiterated that the Trust's Report had caused 'offence'.[157] The main source of this offence centred on the accusation that the Trust had linked Churchill to slavery by association.[158] The Trust's Report mentions Churchill in relation to British rule in India

[153] Simon Heffer, 'The National Trust's Job is to Conserve Our History – Not Vilify its Heroes' *The Telegraph,* 24 October 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/news/national-trusts-job-conserve-history-not-vilify-heroes/, accessed 1 May 2022.
[154] Simon Osborne, 'National Trust in New Woke Row: Accused of Asking Children to "Condemn Britain's History",' *Express*, 6 April 2021, https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/1419675/national-trust-woke-row-colonial-countryside-project-children-british-history, accessed 20 September 2021.
[155] Hayley Dixon, 'National Trust Forcing Volunteers to Undergo Diversity Training on Return after Lockdown,' *The Telegraph*, 13 April 2021, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2021/04/13/exclusive-national-trust-forcing-volunteers-undergo-diversity/, accessed 21 September 2021.
[156] HC Deb, 'Future of the National Trust,' 11 November 2020, Vol. 683 Col. 442WH, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-11-11/debates/14F2215E-66AC-4A16-B4E2-4937E24BAC26/FutureOfTheNationalTrust, accessed 1 September 2023.
[157] HL Debate, 'National Trust Acts,' 3 December 2020, Vol. 808, Col. 821, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Lords/2020-12-03/debates/E3497C09-5706-42CC-B02A-84C0CF9EE2C6/NationalTrustActs, accessed 1 September 2023.
[158] David Sanderson, 'National Trust Told to Learn from Churchill Slavery Row,' *The Times*, 12 November 2020, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/national-trust-told-to-learn-from-churchill-slavery-row-rtn8kdz66, accessed 25 September 2021.

after 1857 and has an entry about Chartwell, his former home, in the Gazetteer of National Trust properties with links to colonialism. The entry about Churchill in relation to India states that he was Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1921-1922; Prime Minister during the Bengal Famine of 1943, which his government was criticised for its handling of; and that he was opposed to Indian self-governance.[159] The entry for Chartwell explains that it was Churchill's family home, and reiterates the same information about Churchill's political career, adding that he helped to draft the Anglo-Irish Treaty at the time of the creation of the Irish Free State.[160] It also notes that historian and Conservative MP Robert Rhodes James has described Churchill's life as 'exceptionally long, complex, and controversial'.[161] MP Tom Hunt suggested in Parliament that the Trust's inclusion of Churchill in the Report was evidence that a much loved national organisation was being 'taken over by woke-ist elements' and that this was one of many attempts to denigrate Churchill.[162] Jacob Rees-Mogg responded that 'it is sad that a once great organisation...cannot realise how wonderful a man like Churchill was'.[163]

In the lead up to the Trust's 2021 AGM, Simon Jenkins, former Trust Chairman, joined in, publishing an article accusing the Trust of 'provoking' the backlash it received for the Interim Report and arguing it should focus on what he believes are the real issues facing it.[164] Jenkins' article was later amended to make clear that the Trust's Report did not associate Churchill directly with slavery, and again to remove a reference to 'an apparent lack of "peer review"'.[165] John Orna Ornstein, Director of Curation and Experience at the Trust, responded to clarify that the Trust's Report had not condemned Churchill or been written by partisan authors and that it had had an

[159] Interim Report, 55.
[160] Interim Report, 70.
[161] Interim Report, 70.
[162] HC Debate, 'Business of the House,' 24 September 2020, Vol. 680, Col. 1152, https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-09-24/debates/7AE9F785-E4AE-4095-AA5F-D00D9F278BE4/BusinessOfTheHouse?highlight=national%20trust#contribution-7723CD9C-84BD-4C41-8EC6-C64F4246281B, accessed 1 September 2023.
[163] HC Debate, 'Business of the House,' 24 September 2020, Vol. 680, Col. 1152.
[164] Simon Jenkins, 'The National Trust has Needlessly Provoked an "Anti-Woke" Campaign,' *The Guardian,* 13 October 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/13/national-anti-woke-campaign-slavery-churchill-culture-war, accessed 1 September 2023.
[165] Jenkins, 'The National Trust has Needlessly Provoked an "Anti-Woke" Campaign'.

internal and external review process.[166] A month later, Jenkins appeared on *The Today Programme* on BBC Radio 4 with Neil Bennett, city editor at the *Telegraph*, in a discussion which saw Jenkins and Bennett claim again that the Trust was acting in politically motivated ways and that the Report was 'sub-standard', comments that went unchallenged by the host.[167] Appearing in a *Spectator* podcast, Jenkins' also described the Trust's interest in the history of colonialism as being 'very odd', suggesting that any relationship between its properties and that history as being 'pretty tenuous'.[168] These comments are not only provocative, they also point to the emotion behind much of the backlash, that Jenkins and others are made uncomfortable that they are not the only ones with a seat at the table anymore, or that an organisation like the Trust might serve different interests under new leadership. Jenkins had previously claimed that he felt 'like a black person must have 30 years ago', imagining that black women have an unfair advantage in getting opportunities over white men like himself, despite his continued high-profile career.[169]

This was in a climate that saw Prime Minister Boris Johnson vow to defend Churchill's statue in Parliament Square, London, after graffiti was painted on it on 7 June, within the wider context of Black Lives Matter protests and the removal of the statue of Edward Coleston in Bristol on June 8th.[170] In 2021, academics at Churchill College, Cambridge, also came under fire for organising a series of events entitled *Churchill, Empire and Race*, which explored his legacy critically in relation

[166] John Orna-Ornstein, 'Churchill Was Not Condemned in National Trust Report,' *The Guardian,* 21 October 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/21/churchill-was-not-condemned-in-national-trust-report, accessed 10 September 2023.
[167] Brian Cathcart, 'The Today Programme and the War on the National Trust: An Episode in Shameful Journalism,' *Byline Times,* 4 November 2021, https://bylinetimes.com/2021/11/04/the-today-programme-and-the-war-on-the-national-trust-an-episode-in-shameful-journalism/, accessed 10 September 2023.
[168] 'Broken Trust: The Crisis at the Heart of the National Trust,' *The Spectator*, https://www.spectator.co.uk/podcast/broken-trust-the-crisis-at-the-heart-of-the-national-trust/, accessed 1 September 2023.
[169] Karl McDonald, 'Sir Simon Jenkins: I Feel Like a Black Person Must Have 30 Years Ago,' *I,* 16 December 2016, https://inews.co.uk/inews-lifestyle/people/sir-simon-jenkins-i-feel-like-black-person-must-30-years-ago-37008, accessed 1 September 2023.
[170] Naomi Rea, 'Boris Johnson Says He Will Defend Winston Churchill's Statue "With Every Breath in My Body," as the Battle Over the UK's Memorials Intensifies,' *Artnet News*, 15 June 2020, https://news.artnet.com/art-world/boris-johnson-winston-churchill-monument-1886954, accessed 10 September 2023.

to colonialism.[171] The Churchill debate creates a false dichotomy: to critique Churchill's beliefs about colonialism or detail his racism – even to simply list his political appointments - is to 'denigrate' him and somehow dismiss or deny his role in the Second World War. Priyamvada Gopal, one of the organisers, is used to targeted press coverage and harassment,[172] and noted that it was new to see white academics being targeted for writing about colonialism in the wake of the publication of the National Trust's Report.[173] The combination of voices across the media and government criticising the Trust for something it had not done fits within the wider framing of the so-called culture war. Dan Hicks argues that the culture war is an example of what he calls 'white projection', in which the more powerful party reframes events as though they are the weaker, or the victim.[174] Restore Trust and its allies claim to be working against the politicisation of the National Trust, when they are weaponizing the Trust themselves. Commentators criticise the Trust's Report for supposed inaccuracy, yet repeatedly must issue corrections to articles with false claims about the Trust in them.[175]

What was ultimately deemed offensive was that the Trust had explicitly stated connections which are usually unspoken or unseen, despite already being known. Often missing in discussions about the *Report* was any real sense of the Trust's own history. It is important to understand the Trust's own contribution to national myths and the monumentalisation of imperial heroes in trying to make sense of all of this. Throughout this thesis, there are examples of moments where the Trust

[171] Priyamvada Gopal, 'Why Can't Britain Handle the Truth about Winston Churchill?' *The Guardian*, 17 March 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/mar/17/why-cant-britain-handle-the-truth-about-winston-churchill, accessed 1 September 2023.
[172] See Chapter 4 of Peter Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), for an account of Gopal's treatment in the British press.
[173] Knight, 'Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History'.
[174] Aditya Iyer, 'Today's Fake Culture War Resurrects an Old Colonial Trick,' *Al Jazeera*, 3 February 2021, https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/2/3/the-museum-must-change-a-qa-with-dan-hicks, accessed 10 September 2023; Hicks, *Brutish Museums*, 41.
[175] See, for example: *The Telegraph* published a false claim from Zewditu Gebreyohanes that the National Trust had fired 1,700 specialist curators in 2020, when in fact only eight had been made redundant, which Restore Trust described as a 'slip of the tongue'. Brian Cathcart, 'The Right-Wing Bid to Capture the National Trust Exposed,' *Byline Times*, 27 October 2022, https://bylinetimes.com/2022/10/27/the-right-wing-bid-to-capture-the-national-trust-exposed/, accessed 1 September 2023.

was explicit about its role in ensuring a certain image of history, perhaps no more so than in the implementation of the Country Houses Scheme. Previously, the Trust helped landed families maintain their connections to their ancestral seats, playing an active role in continuing the aristocracy's history. One curator suggested that the Trust is increasingly changing as it gets further away from the original donor generations, who had had much more input on how the houses were managed.[176] As it moves further away from this role, this may wrongly seem like a betrayal, but it brings the Trust closer to serving the public interest it is supposed to. Another curator I spoke with recognised that addressing colonial history is not as simple as if these were simply brand new pieces of information and stories which were previously unknown: 'we need to look back and…see where certain things really have actively been perpetuated and where it is really visible and…trying to then undo that is even harder'.[177] Peter Mitchell suggests that in publishing the Report, the Trust had failed to maintain the 'gentlemanly tact' expected of it: to 'mention private lives, politics or how a chap made his money is fundamentally rude' as far as its critics see it.[178] In the post-War period, the Trust had presented its country houses effectively from the perspective of their former owners. Now that it has taken a step away from an overly sympathetic perspective, it is seen as having broken an unwritten agreement.

Some participants in Laurajane Smith's survey commented on the colonial histories of the houses, using them to explain the wealth on display. One said that while the British Empire involved exploitation, the money generated was used by the British, specifically the aristocracy, for 'good things', including improving the arts, parroting the arguments made to justify the preservation of country houses by their owners since the 1930s.[179] Another stated directly: 'slave trade, class thing – not a negative thing – created places like this'.[180] These sentiments in part reflect the arguments that have been made in favour of country house preservation over the years,

[176] Interview with National Trust Curator, 16 August 2022.
[177] Interview with National Trust Curator, 31 May 2022.
[178] Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia*, 86.
[179] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 146.
[180] Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 147.

retrospectively justifying the country house through its relatively new status as national heritage. This reflects the Trust's own rhetoric over the years, particularly in the way it has described former owners of its country houses in terms of their artistic interests rather than their political or business careers, often with no more than passing references to their involvement in slavery when it has been known.[181] Yet at the same time, twenty-one per cent of respondents stated that they wanted more information about servants and estate workers, and slavery, and many were conscious that a particular set of meanings had been ascribed to what they were seeing by the Trust.[182]

There was a clear sense from my interviews with National Trust curators that, with the Trust being a very disparate organisation, there was a disconnect between the criticism being levelled at the Trust's central management and its resulting caution and the sense that at property level and in the regions, this was now an established area of work which would continue with growing confidence and a greater indifference towards the backlash. Most strikingly, a clear distinction between the English and Welsh contexts was made. At Penrhyn Castle, there had already been work done around slavery for years with much less controversy than has been seen with some houses in England. One curator noted that difference in government approaches and in general attitudes around exploring and public discussion of colonial legacies, in contrast with England, where the government has repeatedly intervened and tried to prevent museums from doing projects on slavery and there has been much more nervousness and fraught debates.[183] Some individuals working at National Trust properties in Wales had felt they were then being advised by senior management as though they were working in this same English context, leading to frustration at essentially being held back from doing what they had already been doing successfully. Strikingly, a curator stated that as a result they try and do this work 'under the

[181] See Dresser, 'Legacies of British Slave Ownership,' 343; Mitchell and Sobers, 'Re: Interpretation'; Moody and Small, 'Slavery and Public History at the Big House'.
[182] Smith*, Uses of Heritage*, 153-5.
[183] Interview with National Trust Curator, 31 May 2022.

radar'.[184] Ultimately, though, they emphasised that the ability to tell these stories is really just about confidence, resource, and capacity, which were all reduced in 2020 given the financial impact of Coronavirus combined with the intense scrutiny the Trust was under.

One curator I spoke to noted that there had been a shift from a period of 'very focused energy with very clear instructions and mandatory tasks to something much less energised and much less clear', but ultimately, this work was now 'embedded into our thinking'.[185] John Orna Ornstein wrote in November 2020 that the projects the Trust was working relating to colonial history were temporary and 'don't replace our usual curatorial and conservation work'.[186] In saying this, he may have assuaged the critics briefly, but suggested a lack of commitment to this work and a misreading of the bigger shift the heritage sector is undergoing. Although the curator felt there was a lack of direction regarding what to do with the information that had been collated, and less of an impetus to act in a coordinated, immediate way – normally a document like the new information packs would have been shared 'with great ceremony' with a property team, but the context of Coronavirus and the backlash against the Interim Report saw them form a 'research archive' – but now 'every time we see a potential to intervene within the property's narrative or presentation, it is now our role to make sure that that story is fully researched if there is a connection and it's appropriately shared with our audiences in whatever medium'.[187] This sense that curators now feel obliged to continue this work is a sign of change at the Trust, and reflects others' comments that they are continuing work in this area at property level out of their own motivation.

Despite the extensive newspaper coverage in 2020, the reality was that most members and visitors were not upset or offended by what the Trust was doing, as far as the curators I spoke to had seen. While they had anticipated some aggressive responses based on previous experience,

[184] Interview with National Trust Curator, 31 May 2022.
[185] Interview with National Trust Curator, 23 June 2022.
[186] Quoted in Donington, 'Whose Heritage?' 161.
[187] Interview with National Trust Curator, 23 June 2022.

this controversy seems to have reached a new scale than previous ones but is fundamentally driven by influential newspaper columnists more than it is the National Trust membership, and the curators I spoke with all agreed that the extent of criticism in 2020 was overblown. At properties where the Trust had introduced new interpretation materials relating to colonial history in September 2020, one curator suggested the majority of visitors did not seem to have noticed – suggesting some of the new interpretation was only gently moving away from the existing narrative of the property - and that most who did responded positively, and a tiny, 'infinitesimal minority, were angry'.[188] In June 2020, Policy Exchange had surveyed people to see if they thought the Trust should do more to educate people about historic slavey or not and 76% of respondents said it should do more, and between April 2020 and 2021, the Trust gained 50,000 members despite the media coverage.[189]

The difference between earlier iterations of the Challenging Histories Programme and the Interim Report was in part that the latter threatened the traditional narrative of the country house more. Instead of adding in stories of servants, suffragettes, and gay couples, the Trust's Report on colonialism mostly focused on the same men the Trust has been talking about since it first acquired their houses. Rather than further diversifying the figures who appear in its guidebooks, this work involves reevaluating the way the patriarchs of the Trust's houses have been represented up to now. In some cases, like Curzon's, their colonial careers have not been suppressed but rather celebrated, and in others, they have been alluded to quietly in the past. The Trust needs to continue this work unapologetically and prioritise questions about how it can best account for these histories, and its own role in perpetuating them through its houses to date.

Conclusion: Escapism

While some call for the National Trust to return to its supposed founding mission, others are sceptical of the Trust's attempts to address colonial history because they look to its historic

[188] Interview with National Trust Curator, 31 May 2022.
[189] Donington, 'Whose Heritage?' 162.

properties for entertainment and escapism. Others do not see an opposition between these things, instead recognising that right wing politicians and commentators have weaponised the Trust, placing far more significance on the National Trust's Report than it would normally be given. The comedian Stewart Lee has suggested that it is 'bizarre' for 'reasonable people, who probably only joined the National Trust because they like carrot cake and a firm hanging buttress' to need to vote in the AGMs to prevent 'fun days out in historic locations' being used in the 'far right's culture war against everything nice'.[190] Robert Shrimsley pleads for nobody to try and 'decolonise the coffee cake'.[191] Yet as Isabel Gilbert memorably commented in a paper about Transatlantic historic house preservation practice, nobody is trying to knock the scone out of anyone's hand in the name of anti-colonialism.[192]

Alexandra Shulman described the Interim Report in the *Daily Mail* as a 'thumping woke lecture' spoiling the experience of visiting National Trust houses like Stourhead, in Wiltshire, which she likens to 'sinking into a warm bath'.[193] Shulman noted that a Trust curator she had met had said the problem people had with the Report was hearing about colonialism from the Trust itself. Many respondents to Smith's survey also referenced the comfort of a country house visit and a sense of safety in the familiarity of it, as well as the belief that the house itself represents stability and continuity. For some, this was entwined with a sense that at a country house, they were also insulated from the complexity of real life and from being challenged.[194] Similarly, a curator I spoke to noted that it seems as though National Trust properties are still seen as places that are not appropriate to host a debate in the way that many museums have become over the past few

[190] Stewart Lee, 'National Trust Members: Get Ready to Choke on your Carrot Cake,' *The Guardian*, 21 August 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/aug/21/national-trust-members-get-ready-to-choke-on-your-carrot-cake, accessed 1 October 2023.
[191] Shrimsley, 'The National Trust Row is Obscuring Its Core Mission: Cake.'
[192] Isabel Gilbert, 'What can British Country House Museums learn from the plantations of the American South?' INTERVENTIONS Seminar series, see: https://interventionsseries.wordpress.com/seminars/, accessed 1 October 2023.
[193] Alexandra Shulman, 'I Want a Nice Tea Towel not a Thumping Woke Lecture,' *Mail on Sunday*, 23 October 2021, https://www.dailymail.co.uk/debate/article-10123997/ALEXANDRA-SHULMANS-NOTEBOOK-want-nice-tea-towel-not-thumping-woke-lecture.html, accessed 11 September 2023.
[194] Smith, *Uses of Heritage,* 143.

decades, in part because they are seen as more deferential spaces, but also because for many they are about escapism and relaxation.[195] The same curator suggested that the Trust's membership model requires it to keep its members happy with its 'offer' and noted that the Trust's financial model has capitalised on the cream teas and experience of a 'lovely day out'.[196] This makes it difficult to present history in a critical way because the Trust is not marketing the disruption of that space; it is promoting the country house as an idyllic getaway. However, as the curator noted, this escapism is not universally desired or achievable; for many, the country house visit can be an alienating experience, particularly when they can see that the historic narrative they are being presented with is a misleading one.

The escapism of the country house visit depends on a detachment from the history of the place. As Peter Mitchell notes: Charles Moore and others criticising the Trust's *Report* argue that the people visiting its properties are paying good money to access 'a holiday in innocence, free of the knowledge of [the] structural violence' which underpinned the creation of the country house as a haven for its owners in the first place.[197] If people want to escape, what is it that they are trying to get away from, and where are they looking to escape to? Patrick Wright suggests that in the late twentieth century the disorder of the postmodern world made the order of an upstairs/downstairs social hierarchy, in which each individual had a clearly defined role, appealing as a place of simplicity and escape that people could access by visiting country houses and other heritage sites.[198] During the height of the Coronavirus Pandemic, British people widely turned to what Hannah Rose Woods refers to as 'cultural comfort food' – looking at throwback photos on social media, watching old television series, taking up arts and crafts - to help them cope with what was happening. [199] For some people, cultural comfort food might take its literal

[195] Interview with National Trust Curator, 23 June 2022.
[196] Interview with National Trust Curator, 23 June 2022.
[197] Mitchell, *Imperial Nostalgia,* 84.
[198] Wright, *On Living in An Old Country,* 22.
[199] Woods, *Rule, Nostalgia*, 13-4.

form in the visit to a National Trust house, of course accompanied by the ritual of eating scones in the teashop.

Sarah Merker's National Trust Scone Project took the association between the National Trust and scones to new heights, eating a scone at every National Trust site that serves them over a period of ten years and rating them on her blog, alongside an explanation of the history of the property she had visited. Her decision to do the project had been sparked by a visit to Osterley Park in 2013, which she realised she 'couldn't remember a thing about' when she got home.[200] The Trust has capitalised on Merker's project, publishing a recipe book of scones with her. In her blog posts, Merker made observations about the characters she met on her visits, the different styles adopted by the volunteer guides, and the "types" of visitor she encountered included the Expert Visitors, who interrupt the National Trust guides to correct them on architectural and historical details, driving everyone mad by explaining tiny details about the property. [201] At the Birmingham Back to Backs, Merker met the "Lived-It Visitor", described as 'the people who have first-hand experience of what you're looking at, which means they ask brilliant questions or make really insightful comments'.[202] Merker's project turned into something of an informal study of the National Trust visit, and reflects how the different strands of the Trust's work intersect and overlap.

More than anything, the purpose of the National Trust is to provide people with ways to feel physically connected to nature and to history. For a lot of people, a day out at a National Trust site is about getting space. I do not think that the majority of people see the National Trust's Interim Report as being in opposition to that. However, the tensions raised in this chapter, and the ramifications of the backlash against the Report, are real. A lot of visitors to National Trust sites

[200] Sarah Merker, 'I Spent a Decade Eating Scones in Every National Trust Tearoom,' *The Guardian,* 5 May 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2023/may/05/experience-i-spent-a-decade-eating-scones-in-every-national-trust-tearoom, accessed 1 October 2023.
[201] Sarah Merker, 'Melord Hall,' National Trust Scones blog post, 1 October 2016, https://www.nationaltrustscones.com/2016/10/melford-hall.html, accessed 1 October 2023.
[202] Sarah Merker, 'Birmingham Back to Backs,' Blog post, 11 May 2023, https://www.nationaltrustscones.com/2023/05/birmingham-back-to-backs.html/, accessed 1 October 2023.

are there to escape the present, not to be confronted by the past, and reconciling the country house as a space for escapism with the reality of their often brutal histories is a fundamental challenge.

For the Trust to get away from these endless back and forth debates about what its role in society is, it needs to define its work more clearly. Most importantly, it must follow the lead of its curators, who are continuing to push on with research and reinterpretation despite the coordinated backlash between the press, politicians, and Restore Trust. The priority for the Trust going forward in this area needs to be to think holistically, addressing the individual histories of its properties appropriately but also its institutional history. Part of the problem with the debate about the Trust using museum labels is that even where it does add them, they are not enough to address this history. As I discuss in the concluding chapter of this thesis, the Trust needs to address its own role in shaping history in the present.

Chapter 8 Concluding Thoughts

This study aimed to better understand how the National Trust's re-creation of country houses as heritage sites in the twentieth century relates to the history of the British Empire. The primary material studied demonstrates, in multiple ways, that the Trust's own history, its properties, and the collections associated with them have been shaped by colonialism. The ways that these places and objects have been understood and presented to the public have been with largely uncritical admiration, creating a disconnect between them and the historic contexts in which they developed. In its broadest remit, my thesis supports the argument that the National Trust and its representation of the past have been influenced by imperial culture throughout its existence. Specifically, this case has been made through research into the Trust's international connections and, in particular, relationships with preservationists in the US; through the consideration of Kedleston Hall and other properties held by the Trust today which demonstrate how imperialism has been naturalised in these settings; and by the use of recent news media and interviews with individuals working within the Trust to explore how the organisation is engaging with these topics presently. While there is a growing literature detailing the varied connections between country houses and colonialism, which often suggests that the country house has been presented in ways that obscure these connections, there has yet to be a more specific assessment of how and why this came to be. This thesis has attempted to fill this knowledge gap and contribute to the efforts by the National Trust to address the colonial past through its properties, by uncovering some of the ways it was shaped by colonialism itself.

The research behind this thesis was deeply affected by the conditions of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Fundamentally, while some of the core themes of the project remain, the topic studied changed from being an archaeological study of photographs to a project about historic preservation. The changes made to the project meant that as I was completing my research, I was still working out the specifics of what I was studying. With the National Trust being closed for most of 2020, combined with great uncertainty about what kinds of travel and access would be

possible even when it did reopen, I was unable to find out what archival material would be available to me even as I shifted the focus of my research. Once I was able to access archival material, I was often finding out key details about the Trust's history as I went. At the same time, the response to the National Trust's publication of its Interim Report in 2020 has continued to develop. As these events are still unfolding, it has been difficult to keep up as I have prepared and written this thesis. At the time of writing, Restore Trust has unsuccessfully campaigned against the Trust's use of a proxy vote in its elections and failed to get its favoured nominees elected to the Council through the 2023 AGM.[1] To try and keep this aspect of the thesis manageable, I have focused predominantly on the immediate backlash against the Trust in 2020 and 2021, referencing more recent developments where relevant. This necessarily means the thesis does not bring the reader right up to date but hopefully keeps the narrative digestible and within the stated period of the thesis. These are, of course, common experiences to any research project but were exaggerated by the initial wait to access archives and the lack of information about what was in them ahead of time. While photographs did not remain the core object of study in this thesis, they have played an important role in framing how I have thought about the themes and examples detailed in the preceding chapters. In an appendix at the end of the thesis, I have included a few of these for reference.

This study has been based predominantly on written sources from the National Trust's archives. The sections focusing on Colonial Williamsburg and Curzon's preservation projects in India would certainly have benefitted from further research in relevant archives. The lack of ability to travel for the first few years of this research project and the lack of foresight to be able to plan research trips to the United States or India once travel did become possible ultimately hindered this. Naturally, there are gaps in my research which result from these constraints, which of course point to avenues for further research which might enhance the insights I have been able to draw out. In

[1] Emily Harle, 'Pressure Group Fails to Get Candidates Elected to National Trust Trustee Body,' *Third Sector*, 14 November 2023, https://www.thirdsector.co.uk/pressure-group-fails-candidates-elected-national-trust-trustee-body/governance/article/1847443, accessed 25 November 2023.

particular, further study of the connections between the National Trust and the US National Trust for Historic Preservation and Colonial Williamsburg may be fruitful. The majority of information I was able to find about these particular relationships came from two files in the Trust's archives, and more might be found on the other side of the Atlantic to give more of a sense of the US perspective of the Trust and historic preservation as a Transatlantic project.

This thesis has built on existing research across Archaeology, Anthropology, Art History, Heritage Studies, and History, which has enabled me to consider what the Trust is and what it does from a range of perspectives. However, at times it has been difficult to define the disciplinary boundaries of my own research. Having a background in History before coming to complete this project in an Archaeology department has evidently shaped my interests and approach. This project may have benefitted from a more obviously ethnographic approach to the institutional history and workings of the National Trust from its outset, or a firm basis in museum studies. However, this would have created a different thesis.

This thesis explicitly deals with the ways that history has been approached by the National Trust and individuals, such as George Curzon, rather than being a study of how these efforts have been received and interpreted by the public. Where possible, I have tried to address this aspect of the topic and in particular Chapter Seven broadened my discussion to consider how the Trust is portrayed in the media rather than by itself. How the public views and identifies with the past as seen through the country house is more elusive and deserves dedicated study. More data about how visitors understand and interpret what they see when visiting country houses may be fruitful, as would insight from those who do not visit country houses. The latter might help heritage professionals more accurately identify what drives this, whether it is inaccessibility, lack of interest, or different reasons entirely.

Similarly, while the interviews I conducted with National Trust curators were valuable in contextualising what the Trust is currently actioning around colonial history and how individuals implementing this work at individual properties understand and approach it, they were limited

in number and scope. These interviews only reflect the views of a handful of Trust employees. Ideally, further research in this area would involve more curatorial staff, as well as volunteers, to gain a broader sense of how people across the organisation are understanding the Trust's work and how colonial history can best be addressed within it. Volunteers are those who are interacting with visitors on the ground and at present, the Trust relies on them to communicate much of the history of its properties. Better understanding of how that process works and how it shapes the history which is communicated to visitors would be incredibly useful for researchers interested in the Trust or any similar organisation.

The project is not, and could not be, a comprehensive study of the National Trust or its history. However, it has explored the Trust's changing practices over time in ways that inform what it is doing today. The chapters of this thesis moved chronologically through the National Trust's history, revealing the ways that colonialism has shaped it as an organisation as well as the stories it tells about the past through its historic houses.

Together, Chapters Two, Three, and Four demonstrate some of the ways that the National Trust conceived the past through its acquisitions and international relationships. From its founding, the Trust understood British history as imperial history. In Chapter Two I used Quebec House as an example of this. Acquired in 1917, the childhood home of General Wolfe was used as a monument to him, as well as a place for visitors to learn about the British Empire as something originating from the English countryside. The notion of North American history being rooted in England's landscape and buildings was part of the National Trust's founding ideals, as illustrated by the words of its founders and their connections with preservationists in the US. Simultaneously, Curzon's career reflects how historic preservation in Britain was directly shaped by practices being developed and used in the colonies. This is illustrated by comparing Curzon's role in shaping preservation policy in India and England. Curzon's interest in historic preservation was directly related to his investment in colonial government. The examples of the Taj Mahal restoration and the creation of the Victoria Memorial Hall demonstrate that the creation of new monuments and

the preservation of existing ones are connected activities which can be used to achieve the same ends. In Curzon's case, this was to fix the past in place, with monuments from the Mughal period and British monuments representing different stages in a linear history. Curzon's role in the preservation of Tattershall Castle in 1911 offers another example of preservation being framed as a patriotic act, having stopped American buyers from transporting the castle to the United States. Chapter Four expanded on the National Trust's international relationships, going into further detail about its North American connections and showing how these continued into the 1950s, as well as other examples of national trusts set up around the world. As the British Empire was beginning to formally disintegrate, preservationists continued to approach the past in ways shaped by their relationship to colonialism.

The second half of the thesis explored how the Trust has come to present the past through its country houses today. The National Trust's Country Houses Scheme was largely advocated for by aristocrats who had influential careers which were often connected to colonial government and business. The Scheme fundamentally changed how country houses were portrayed to the public. Country houses were transformed into national treasures, and this has impacted how their histories have been told ever since. At Kedleston Hall, Curzon's vision of himself as part of a bigger history of the British Empire is presented uncritically. Though the Trust has repeatedly acknowledged the colonial context of what the visitor sees in the house, there has been no permanent intervention to question or complicate Curzon's impact on the world. More broadly, the National Trust country houses naturalises the vision of social hierarchy represented in the estates, presenting an idealised vision of them as uncontested institutions, as though they have always been there and always will be. The consequences of presenting the past in this way are seen through the backlash against the Trust in 2020. Debates about the National Trust's purpose as an institution, which began back in the 1930s when the Trust began systematically acquiring country houses, have become more intense as the organisation has grown. In trying to reconcile the Trust's modern role as an organisation which provides people with access to historical spaces for the purposes of education, entertainment, and escapism, the contradictions of the Country

Houses Scheme remain. The challenge of appropriately accounting for the colonial histories of the Trust's properties has made these ongoing debates more fraught and pressing at a time of wider reckoning with colonialism and racism across museums and other heritage and arts organisations across Europe and North America today.

This thesis has also reaffirmed that the National Trust's preservation of historic properties is not neutral or passive. Heritage, as we know, is constructed, and conservation is about intervention. The Trust slows the process of decay by protecting wall hangings and paintings from over-exposure to light, and sometimes it must damage something in order to protect it. Sometimes, making changes to a property is about preserving existing materials, and at other moments it is about restoring an element of the house to better communicate its history. Over the past twenty years, for example, the Trust rehung the blue damask wallpaper in the drawing room and the State Apartment at Kedleston Hall, replacing them with newly made reproductions of the original eighteenth-century material, made more durable for its modern display. In the same way that conservation is not a passive process, neither is curation. In some ways, the Country Houses Scheme has acted to shield former owners from the sort of exposure I proposed at the beginning of this thesis, slowing the decline of the country seat as the centre of political power in Britain, or at least protecting it from retrospective scrutiny. The country house is presented in a way that means the family are over-represented in history, divorced from context, and contradictorily, hardly seen at all. The Trust's recent decision to reopen Clandon Park as a shell after it was badly damaged in a fire in 2015, rather than complete a full restoration, is indicative of the choice involved in any building's preservation. As is the Trust's decision to return Hinemihi, the Māori meeting house, home to New Zealand. She was first brought to Clandon in 1892 from New Zealand by William Hillier, 4th Earl of Onslow after he finished his term as Governor there and has since become the meeting house for the London Māori community. Soon, she will be returned to New Zealand, and new carvings created by descendants of the original makers will be brought to Clandon in return. The National Trust has the potential to serve the communities whose histories

are connected to the buildings, parks, and open spaces it owns by embracing this kind of change and continuing to create new histories.

Disney History

In 2010, the National Trust's Chairman, Simon Jenkins, was accused of "Disneyfication" in response to his project to make National Trust country houses more appealing, or as he put it: to 'bring them to life'.[2] This project involved making the houses generally more welcoming to visitors, with fires being lit, spaces to sit and read or play games, and much more activity being encouraged than usually is at a historic house. Visitors typically walk quietly around a designated route, encouraged to respectfully admire the rooms on display, pointed in the right direction by velvet ropes, dried flowers on furniture reminding them not to touch or sit. Jenkins' approach in some ways democratised the visitor experience by inviting people to *do* things in the buildings and grounds other than only look at them, bringing a welcome change from what had been described as the 'dead hand' of the Trust when he first arrived in his role. Stephen Bayley, the architecture and design critic, took against these changes, suggesting the new approach encouraged a 'queasy voyeurism' from visitors and accused Jenkins of using the 'dirty tricks' of a theme park to enhance the 'experience of great architecture'.[3] Bayley's argument, much like those made by the Trust to distinguish its country houses from museums in the 1960s, was that visitors should admire the country house for its great architecture and the incredible furniture and artworks which fill it, without needing to enhance them. Sounding like the Trust's post-War Historic Buildings Committee, Bayley wondered what would come next: barbeque pits and campsites in the grounds? In response, Simon Jenkins accused Bayley of elitism, suggesting that he seemed to be 'appalled' at the idea that the working classes might enjoy a visit to a National Trust property.[4]

[2] Simon Jenkins, 'Who Do You Trust?' *The Spectator*, 30 October 2010, https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/who-do-you-trust/, accessed 9 October 2023.
[3] Stephen Bayley, 'Stop this Disneyfication of the National Trust,' *The Times,* 18 October 2010, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/stop-this-disneyfication-of-the-national-trust-3hqcml22xx3, accessed 9 October 2023.
[4] Jenkins, 'Who Do You Trust?'

The back and forth went on throughout 2010, with a debate on the topic held at the Trust's 2010 AGM between Lucy Worsley, head curator at Historic Royal Palaces, and John Goodall, Architectural Editor at *Country Life*, and another at the Hay Festival between Jenkins, Bayley, and Goodall. Worsley made the financial case for making historic houses more appealing to visitors who are not interested in the technical details or architecture or the decorative arts. Conversely, Goodall emphasised the risk of damage to properties by letting people touch things and Bayley argued that the Trust was 'crossing the line' into entertainment, though how that line is defined is unclear.[5] For Jenkins, his approach was about getting back to the roots of the Country Houses Scheme, making the houses appear lived-in again after years of what he saw as museumification.[6] Once again, the arguments being put forth were elusive: why should the Trust not entertain or educate, and why can it not do both? What was it that the Trust had "originally" done, and what was fundamentally different now? Much like in 2020, criticism of the Trust in 2010 soon became the question, at least from Bayley: 'what is the point of the National Trust?'.[7]

It turned out that the National Trust had embraced the so-called Disney approach explicitly, with managers attending training courses partly run by the Disney Institute, and Jenkins suggesting that the Trust had much to learn from such a successful organisation.[8] Sarah Staniforth, the National Trust's Director of Historic Properties, argued that this was not about turning the Trust's historic buildings into 'theme shows', but about replicating the experience of arriving at a Disney property, where 'you are treated as a human being' and welcomed in.[9] Despite his interest in Disney's style of visitor welcome and marketing, Simon Jenkins emphasised the difference

[5] Stephen Adams, 'National Trust is "Disney-fying its Country Houses,' *The Telegraph*, 29 May 2010, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturenews/7778870/National-Trust-is-Disney-fying-its-country-houses-say-critics.html, accessed 7 September 2023.
[6] 'National Trust Opens "Disney Debate",' *Country Life*, 28 October 2010, https://www.countrylife.co.uk/news/national-trust-opens-disney-debate-20411, accessed 12 October 2023.
[7] Stephen Bayley, 'What Is the Point of the National Trust?' *Independent*, 5 June 2010, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/what-is-the-point-of-the-national-trust-1992007.html, accessed 10 October 2023.
[8] John-Paul Flintoff, 'Has the National Trust Gone Disney?' *The Times,* 31 October 2010, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/has-the-national-trust-gone-disney-pkrkwnnktxd, accessed 10 October 2023.
[9] Flintoff, 'Has the National Trust Gone Disney?'

between the Trust and Disney, stating that this was about the 'fundamental, historical truth' found in the authenticity of the buildings the former owns, no matter how much it is reinterpreted by each generation.[10]

Though the Trust is keen to distinguish authentic history from the Disney fairytale, the settings of Disney films have often drawn on images of a romanticised European past not entirely dissimilar to those promoted by preservationist organisations like the National Trust. The design for Disney's Cinderella Castle is believed to have been based on Craigever Castle, a pink castle near Alford in Aberdeenshire, now owned by the National Trust for Scotland.[11] In 1949, Walt Disney visited Norton Disney, a village in Lincolnshire, where he saw the fourteenth-century tomb of Sir Williams d'Isney, with a family crest which included the three lions seen on Norman flags.[12] In 1965, Disney decided to add the coat of arms to Sleeping Beauty's castle at the Disneyland theme park in California, and the symbol has appeared in the opening credits of Disney films since 2006.[13]

In the 1990s, the Disney company considered creating a theme park in Haymarket, Virginia. Named Disney's America, the proposed park was designed to tell the history of the United States rather than the fairytales of its films. In doing so, the plan was not to present only celebratory moments, as Disney was clear that it planned to embrace controversy, showing visitors the Civil War 'with all its racial conflict' and slavery in an honest way. The idea for Disney's America was to authentically represent key events in the country's history by having visitors take part in role-play and travel physically through different periods of history as they walked through the park and rode on its rides. This included learning 'what it was like' to be a Civil War soldier or escape

[10] David Lowenthal and Simon Jenkins, 'Prizing the Past for the Present and the Future,' British Academy Review, 18 (Summer 2011), 36.
[11] 'Bid to Keep Craigievar Castle which Inspired Walt Disney Pink,' *BBC News,* 31 January 2023, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-64438847, accessed 16 October 2023.
[12] Colin Peterson, 'The Lincolnshire Village Honoured in Every Disney Film Since 2006,' *BBC News,* 16 October 2023, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-67102341, accessed 30 October 2023.
[13] Peterson, 'The Lincolnshire Village Honoured in Every Disney Film Since 2006'.

enslavement via the Underground Railroad.[14] Immediately, these proposals caused controversy locally and nationally, due to concerns about the park's potential impact on the local economy and environment, as well as its representation of the national past. The park was planned to be built about five miles from Manassas National Battlefield Park, the site of major Civil War battles including the Battles of Bull Run, where Confederate General Thomas J. Jackson gained the nickname Stonewall. The idea of building a theme park there was seen as disrespectful and unnecessary for some; how could Disney do justice to the experience of war better than a real battleground? With regards to slavery, it seemed that Manassas Park could only diminish or trivialise what had happened and the commodification of it was of particular concern, with some fearing the possibility of 'little souvenir slave ships'.[15] A group of historians was set up, called Protect Historic America, to oppose Disney's proposed park, concerned by the park's potential to misrepresent the past or portray it distastefully. They were portrayed by supporters of the project as gatekeepers and elitists who believed only professional historians should be allowed to talk about the past, mirroring similar debates in Britain about historic sites with popular appeal in the 1980s.[16]

Despite Disney's America being a new idea in the 1990s, the Disney Corporation had always been telling history through its parks. As Stephen Fjellman details in his ethnography of Walt Disney World, this was a large part of their purpose beyond making profit. Disney's vision of history as it developed through Disneyland's creation in the 1950s was formed to 'soothe park visitors' by skipping past the world wars and Depression to 'more distant and hazy times', distracting from the present and recent past with a vague, nostalgic vision of the Colonial period, the American West, and the turn of the twentieth century in Main Street U.S.A., a street at the Magic Kingdom

[14] Michelle Singletary and Spencer S. Hsu, 'Disney Says VA. Park will be Serious Fun,' *Washington Post*, 12 November 1993, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/11/12/disney-says-va-park-will-be-serious-fun/a1c0ef16-ae33-4d99-a489-3fbfeedd1c7b/, accessed 2 September 2023.
[15] Elizabeth Mehren, 'An Uncivil War over Disney Plan: Families, Friends and even Venerable Historians Feud over Proposed History Park near a Virginia Battlefield,' *Los Angeles Times,* 17 August 1994, https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-08-17-mn-28128-story.html, accessed 2 September 2023.
[16] Mehren, 'An Uncivil War over Disney Plan'.

Park based on Walt Disney's childhood town Marceline in Missouri.[17] Fjellman's exploration of Disney began at Colonial Williamsburg, which he associated with Disney World as one of the theme parks, open-air historical museums, and heritage sites which entertain and fascinate him.[18] For a long time, Colonial Williamsburg had a reputation for being Disney-like because it was too clean and nice, not an authentic re-creation of the past, and by 1994 it was praised for having fixed this by literally adding more grit and dirt in the form of horse droppings, which would never be found on Disney's Main Street.[19] Like the 'horse droppings that decorate the neat streets' at Colonial Williamsburg,[20] the celebration of authenticity at the National Trust is mocked by Alan Bennett in his 2012 play, *People*. Ralph Lumsden, a National Trust representative, becomes convinced that Stacpole, the fictional ancestral seat, has the potential to become a Trust property when he finds a set of chamber pots still filled with the 'ancient urine' of famous former guests, including Rudyard Kipling, Ramsay MacDonald, and T. E. Lawrence.[21] Handler and Gable note that the common misconception that Colonial Williamsburg actually is a theme park haunts the organisation, and is rooted in the foundation's hybrid character as an educational institution and a business.[22] Much like the National Trust debates since the 2000s, the conflict between education, entertainment, and commodification makes these institutions difficult to define.

Additionally, Disney's films tell stories which reflect and shape the culture of the US not only through references to North American history and locations but also through stories set around the world. As Elena Di Giovanni has observed, in the 1990s animated Disney films were mostly focused on cultural otherness, with feature films set everywhere from Colonial Virginia (*Pocahontas*, 1995), Ancient Greece (*Hercules*, 1997) and France in the Middle Ages (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, 1996), to an unspecified African jungle in the nineteenth century (*Tarzan*, 1999), the Middle East (*Aladdin*, 1992), China (*Mulan*, 1998), and South Africa (*The Lion*

[17] Stephen M. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America,* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 59-60.
[18] Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves,* xv.
[19] Handler and Gable, *The New History*, 6.
[20] Handler and Gable*, The New History*, 3.
[21] Alan Bennett, *People*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2012), 46-50.
[22] Handler and Gable, *The New History,* 28-9.

King, 1994). As Giovanni argues, while these films might initially appear to reflect a desire on Disney's part to spread knowledge of different cultures to its audience, the reality of the films is that they rely on North American reference points and familiar visual and verbal stereotypes, to such an extent that translation of their scripts proves particularly challenging.[23] The orientalism at work in Disney's films set in Asia and the Middle East is not based on images invented by Disney. The films *Aladdin*, based on the One Thousand and One Nights folktales; *Mulan*, which retells the story of the Chinese folk heroine Hua Mulan; and *The Jungle Book* (1967), based on Rudyard Kipling's 1894 novel, are examples of a longer tradition of Western history-telling which has similarly stereotyped, misrepresented, and used vague references to different cultures to understand its own. In similar ways, the collections Curzon acquired through his travels and designed his museum at Kedleston Hall to display have been homogenised or ill-defined under an umbrella of "Eastern" culture, encountered by a mostly English audience in the Derbyshire countryside.

The Euro Disney theme park, now known as Disneyland Paris, was opened in France in 1992 while Disney's America was being planned, just as the lines between historic preservation and theme parks appeared to be being blurred. In 1990, the heritage sector in England had been described as '"Englandland", Europe's all-engulfing offshore theme park' by one commentator.[24] Euro Disney caused controversy as it was seen as an Americanisation of a continent that already had their castles and palaces; if the United States had to invent its national history through Disney, Europe certainly did not. As Raphael Samuel writes, what makes the comparison between historic sites and theme parks 'doubly offensive' is that the latter are imported from the US and link history to tourism, which has often been seen as tainting its authenticity.[25] Speaking in conversation with historian David Lowenthal in 2011, Simon Jenkins argued that if the National

[23] Elena Di Giovanni, 'Disney Films: Reflections of the Other and the Self,' *Culture, Language and Representation*, 4 (2007), 91-109.
[24] Simon Hoggart, 'Thinking of Englandland', *Observer Supplement,* 12 August 1990, 5, quoted in David Lowenthal, 'British National Identity and the English Landscape,' *Rural History,* 2:2 (1991), 205-230, 222.
[25] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, 268.

Trust were to deviate from the authenticity of its historic houses to make them more fun for people, that would be when it would become no different to Disneyland. Lowenthal responded that it is not the truth that people want but the appearance of it. Referencing the comparison between Disney's America and Colonial Williamsburg, Lowenthal made the point that, while Colonial Williamsburg seeks to distinguish itself from theme parks based on its authenticity, many people did not see Disney's America as being necessarily less authentic.[26] While Colonial Williamsburg claims to be superior to Disney World because it is 'real', it seems that for many visitors this distinction between genuine historic buildings is not the requirement for a place to be able to represent the past.[27] The National Trust is not the same thing as Disney, but the boundaries are blurrier than they first appear, and both contribute to visitors' imaginings of the world. Disney parks are not a form of historical preservation, but they certainly contribute to visitors' imaginings of the world. Britain does not have a Disney theme park, but Alton Towers was created from a country estate and ironically, Disney's America was directly inspired by Colonial Williamsburg.[28]

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In boiling down what it was that seemed so wrong about Disney proposing to portray slavery through a theme park in the 1990s, Michel-Rolph Trouillot posed a different question to the ones outlined above, one which affects preservationists and curators at the Trust and Williamsburg just as much as it does Disney. For Trouillot, historical authenticity 'resides not in the fidelity to an alleged past but in an honesty vis-à-vis the present as it re-presents the past'.[29] Trouillot's intervention into the Disney debate was to say that for representations of the past to be authentic they must not only account for how our understanding of that past was formed but also be true

[26] David Lowenthal and Simon Jenkins, 'Prizing the Past for the Present and the Future,' *British Academy Review*, 18 (Summer 2011), 36.
[27] Handler and Gable, *The New History*, 222.
[28] Michelle Singletary and Spencer S. Hsu, 'Disney Says VA. Park will be Serious Fun,' *Washington Post*, 12 November 1993, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/11/12/disney-says-va-park-will-be-serious-fun/a1c0ef16-ae33-4d99-a489-3fbfeedd1c7b/, accessed 2 September 2023.
[29] Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 148.

to the present. To discuss slavery only in historical terms and as something which happened in a vacuum, ending with Abolition, no matter how accurate and detailed the portrayal, will never do justice to it. Accordingly, the Disney debate was unresolved because of the present being detached from the past. However, the very dynamic between the past and the present that Trouillot identifies offers the possibility of change with the Trust's current engagement with the history of empire.

When the National Trust published the Interim Report, it was building on research that had been ongoing for years. While the authors of the Report started putting it together before the Black Lives Matter protests began in response to the murder of George Floyd, the Trust's decision to publish it in September 2020 was part of a larger moment of acknowledgement of the conditions which enabled such an event to take place. The public pressure to do something in 2020 - and not just be seen to be doing something, but to find ways of effectively making change - provided a catalyst for the Trust's work on colonialism to become something meaningful. In this way, the Trust was not engaging with colonialism simply in historical terms but in respect to the present.

The Interim Report did not include reflection about why the National Trust had not previously addressed colonial history in its collections, but it acknowledged that this mattered. It is my contention that part of why the National Trust had not previously addressed its colonial history was because of the knowledge gap that this thesis has filled. Fundamentally, rectifying and addressing the present demand to engage with the colonial connections in National Trust country houses requires an understanding of how it became disconnected in the first place. In tracing the genealogy of the Trust's relationship to the Empire, this thesis can be used to instigate change in the present. If the National Trust can do this, it might achieve something of its founding ideals, reimagined for the twenty-first century.

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Appendix: Some Photographs Which Have Shaped This Thesis



Image 1: 'Oblique view of the front of Quebec House, Kent,' HPPA-100328 ©NT/Francis Frith Collection, courtesy of the National Trust.

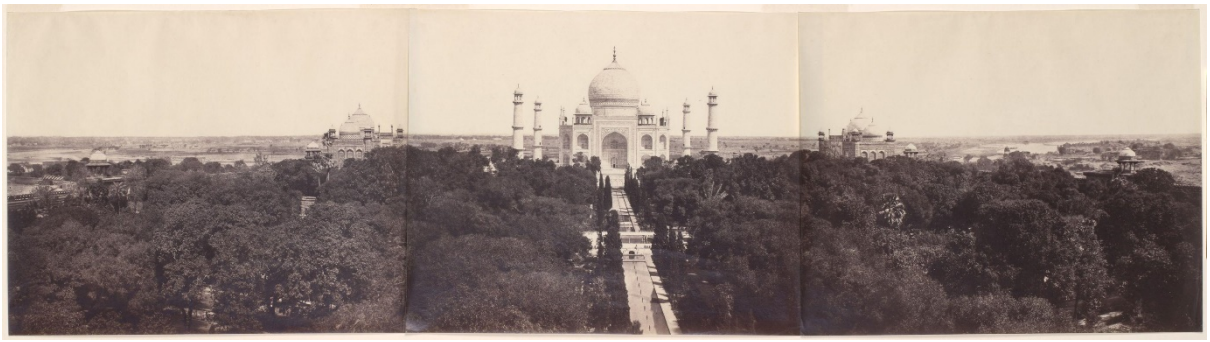


Image 2: 'The Taj Mahal from the Gateway,' (1864) by John Murray, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Photographs, Gilman Collection, Purchase, Cynthia Hazen Polsky Gift, 2005, 2005.100.315a–c.



Image 3: 'A view of the Taj Mahal, Agra (from the top of the gateway)' in an album titled 'India 1906' Photo 337/1, Curzon Collection (British Library), courtesy of the British Library.



Image 4: 'Victoria Memorial, Shewing Gateways,' in an album titled 'Victoria Memorial Calcutta' Photo 430/62, Curzon Collection (British Library), courtesy of the British Library.

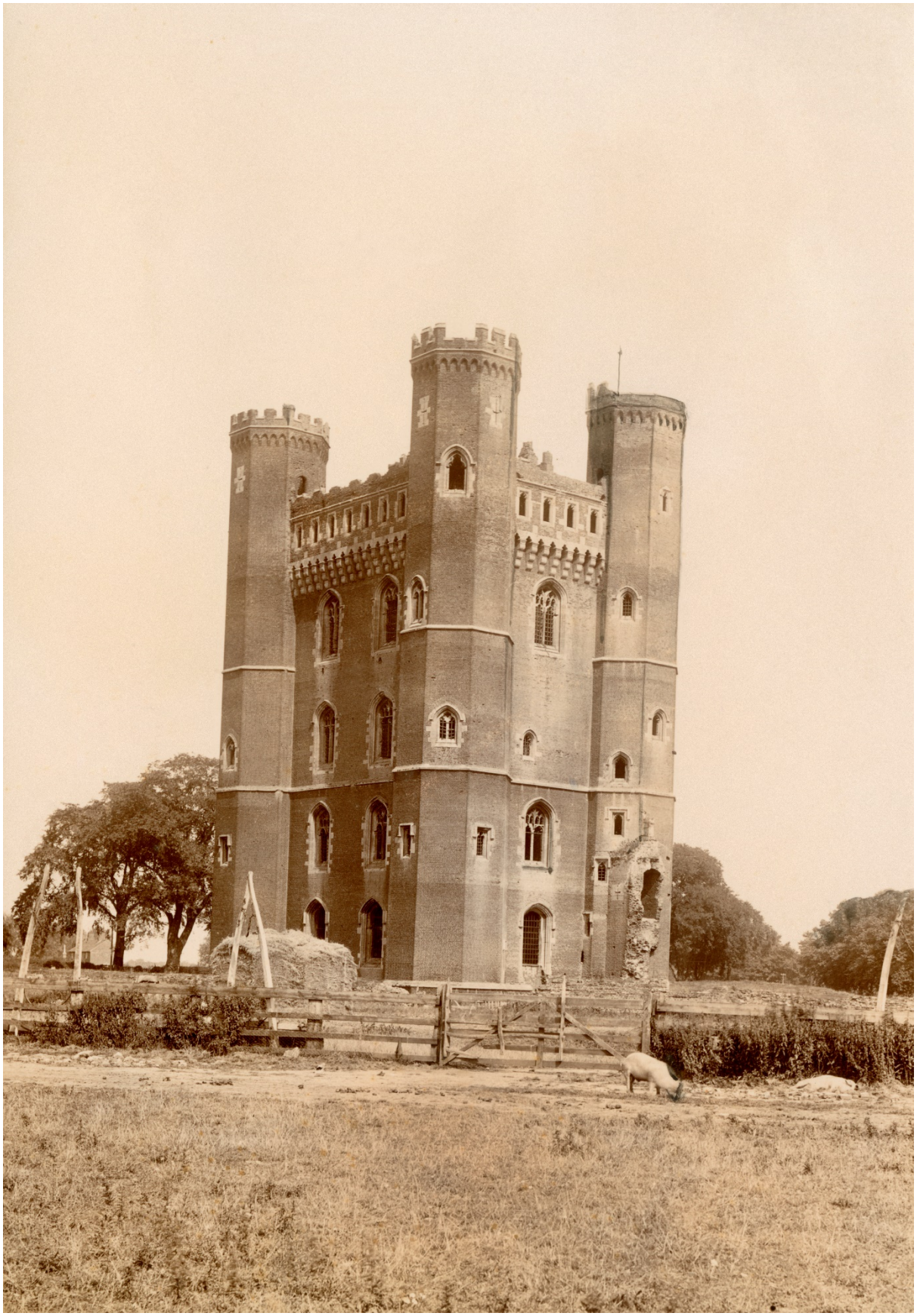


Image 5: 'View of the Keep across the field from the south west at Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire,' HPPA-98931 ©NT/Carlton & Sons, Horncastle, courtesy of the National Trust.



Image 6: 'The Triumphal Procession returning the chimneypieces at Tattershall Castle, Lincolnshire,' (1912) LCN-05-038 ©NT, courtesy of the National Trust.



Image 7: 'The North Front of the Castle and Barbican at Bodiam Castle, East Sussex,' HPPA-54096 ©NT/Francis Frith Collection, courtesy of the National Trust.



Image 8: Front Entrance of Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire (2021), author's photograph.



Image 9: 'Saloon, Kedleston Hall,' Richard Keene, c. 1890, National Trust Kedleston Hall, courtesy of the National Trust.



Image 10: Trophy Corridor, Kedleston Hall (2021), author's photograph.

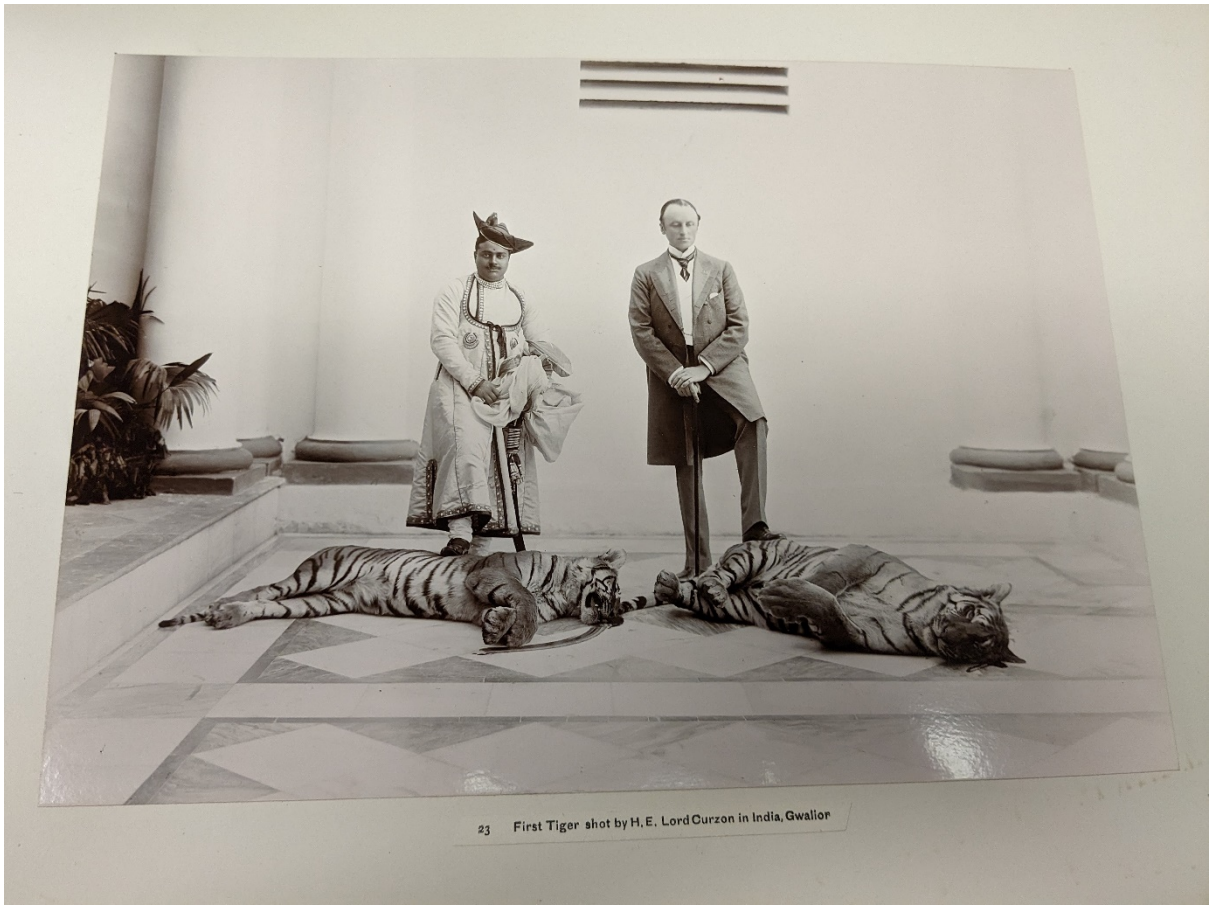


Image 11: 'First Tiger shot by H. E. Lord Curzon in India, Gwalior' in an album titled 'H. E. Lord Curzon's First Tour in India, 1899' Album 430/17, Curzon Collection (British Library), courtesy of the British Library.

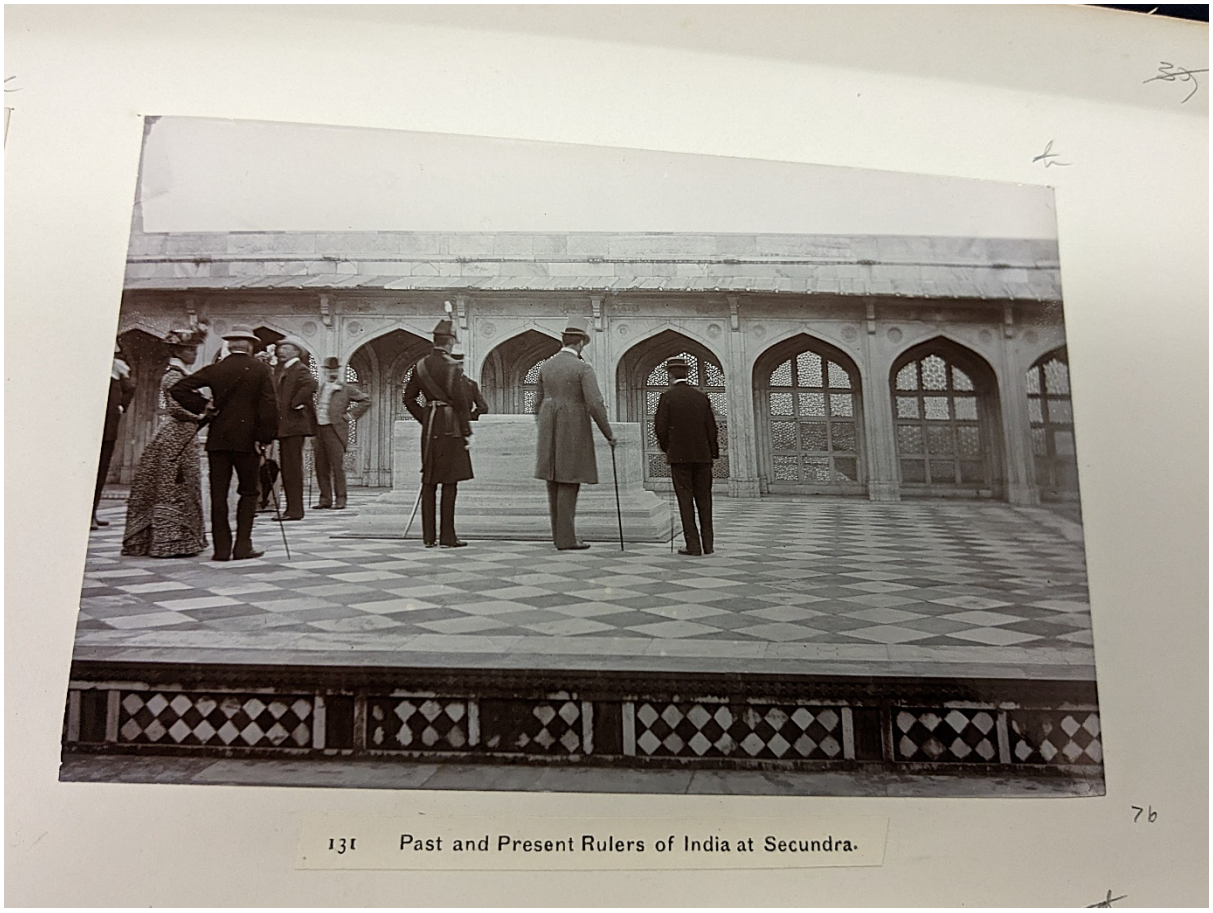


Image 12: 'Past and Present Rulers of India at Secundra' in an album titled 'H. E. Lord Curzon's First Tour in India, 1899' Album 430/17, Curzon Collection (British Library), courtesy of the British Library.



Image 13: 'Lord Curzon's Eastern Museum at Kedleston Hall, Derbyshire' 1303272 NTPL Commissioned ©National Trust Images/James Dobson, courtesy of the National Trust.

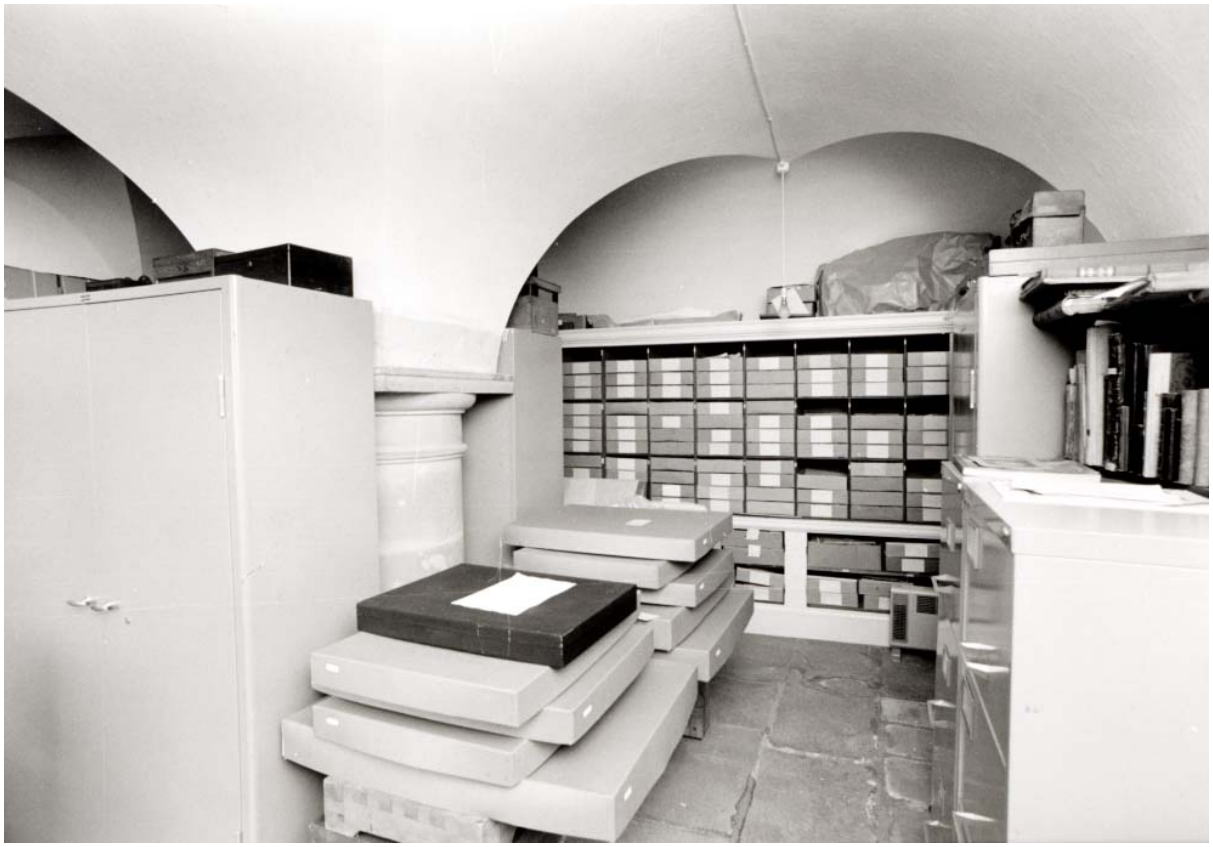


Image 14: The Muniment Room at Kedleston Hall. 'Kedleston Hall,' HPPA-18869 National Trust, courtesy of the National Trust.



Image 15: 'Photograph of Lord Curzon unveiling the statue of Queen Victoria by Mr Derwent Wood at Patiala,' Photo 355/2(105), Dunlop Smith Collection, British Library courtesy of the British Library.



Image 16: 'The statue before unveiling,' in an album titled 'Photographs taken at the unveiling ceremony of the statue of the Earl Curzon of Kedleston,' (1913), Photo 430/61, Curzon Collection, British Library, courtesy of the British Library.



Image 17: 'The Unveiling of the Statue to the Late Marquess Curzon of Kedleston, at Carlton House Terrace, London,' 20 March 1931, Cupboard 4 Shelf 6 Box 2 'Lady Grace Curzon, Mainly after Lord C's Death', Muniment Room, Kedleston Hall (Derbyshire), courtesy of the National Trust.



Image 18: Curzon Statue with Duke of York Statue in the background, Carlton House Terrace, London, (2023), Author's photograph.